

Irish COUNTRY SPORTS and COUNTRY LIFE

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Irish Game Angler cover:
Stevie Munn does some fancy casting on the Six Mile Water.

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Managing Editor: Albert Titterington, **ROI Editor:** Derek Fanning, **NI Editor:** Paul Pringle, **Associate Editor:** Irene Titterington **Sales and Marketing:** Paul Robinson
Publishers: (Editorial & Advertising) Country Lifestyle Exhibitions Ltd. Cranley Hill, 5b Woodgrange Road, Hollymount, Downpatrick BT30 8JE **Tel:** (028) (from ROI 048) 44839167
Email: countrysportsandcountrylife@btinternet.com a.j.titterington@btinternet.com **Web:** www.countrysportsandcountrylife.com
ROI Office: ROI Office: Derek Fanning, E: derekfanning123@gmail.com Tel: 05791 20003
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Country Sports and Country Life Rol Comment

Over the last few weeks I've been reading three hunting books and can strongly recommend them to ICS readers.

'Beagle Tales' by Bob Ford is a humorous book written by a Pennsylvanian beagle owner and shooting enthusiast. Much of it will be unfamiliar to Irish readers because it's about the American hunting scene but there is a good deal which will strike a chord as well. For anyone who loves beagles it's a joyful read, and there are lots of charming passages describing those happy, wonderful dogs. For example Bob describes his beagles 'slumbering quietly in the basement, oblivious to everything. However, the moment they hear the distinct sound of the refrigerator door opening, they all appear en masse, tails wagging like ninja swords flashing through the air, eyes firmly fixed on whoever actually entered the white box that they clearly view as the Holy of Holies, the inner sanctum.' In another passage the author comments, 'Those of us who really enjoy running and hunting with beagles are truly blessed by their merry nature and hunting ability.'

'Beagle Tails' begins with a passage from Gasset's famous book 'Meditations on Hunting,' which memorably describes a pack of hunting dogs, 'The dogs are hard to restrain; their desire to hunt consumes them, pouring from eyes, muzzle, and hide.'

Bob Ford lives in the attractive hills of Pennsylvania and bought his first beagle 30 years ago, an act which eventually resulted, he jokingly remarks, in his life going to the dogs. Bob hunts rabbits and hare with his dogs and shotgun, covering a large part of his State. He's also a clergyman in the Methodist Church and the book is therefore sometimes inspirational in nature, without being uncomfortable or preachy. The book will therefore appeal to people who love hunting, to people who love dogs and to those who believe in God; and it's informed throughout, with a winning sense of humour.

Bob believes that American-made, double barrel, 16 gauge shotguns are the best firearms available to the small game hunter. He also believes that few things compare to the sound of a pack of beagles pursuing rabbits in a picturesque valley on a foggy, dewy morning, an experience which he calls a renewal of the spirit.

The second book I've been reading is another American publication. It's called 'Harrier A Complete and Reliable Handbook,' was co-written by three harrier enthusiasts and published by TFH publications. The book is well written, beautifully produced and, for lovers of the chase, is a fascinating read. The ancient Greek hunter Xenophon made an appearance in Bob Ford's book and is mentioned as well at the beginning of 'Harrier'. Xenophon was a philosopher and military leader and he wrote a book called 'On Hunting', which describes keeping a pack and the various types of hunting one can engage in. He writes about the qualities of a good hound



and gives advice on how to hunt the hare. In one chapter he lists the many names which are appropriate for hounds. The names include Psyche, Pluck, Buckler, Spigot, Lance, Lurcher, Watch, Keeper, etc. Xenophon's description of the physical attributes of his hounds could fit the contemporary harrier, but it's probable that the harrier as we know it is a product of slightly more recent breeding. The three breeds of Harriers, Foxhounds and Beagles are closely related and their bloodlines have often been mixed in

efforts to share the best qualities of each. In the 18th and 19th Centuries in England more foxhound blood was introduced and faster harriers were developed for the sport of mounted fox hunting. Some believe that the Harrier is simply a small Foxhound, but after reading 'Harrier' you will be dissuaded from that notion.

The third and final book is 'Beagling and Otter Hunting' by Robert Colville, which was published in 1940 when the author was Hunting Editor of 'The Field'. This book is a great read and one of its pleasures is discovering that so much of the contemporary practice of beagling hasn't changed in decades. The opening chapter is called 'The conduct of the field' and talks about 'the eternal problem of scent whose presence, breast high, can give such exhilarating sport, and whose absence it is very frequently quite impossible to account for.' Colville goes on to say that when we are out hunting we are there to enjoy ourselves, and everything else is subsidiary to that principal driving force. He points out that the enjoyment of the Master, huntsman and whippers-in depends to a certain extent on 'the thoughtful and sympathetic co-operation of the Field.' All true hunting people share a love of good hound work and the vast majority of foot followers I have come across over the decades enjoy watching the dogs go about their business. 'The first essential, therefore,' comments Colville, 'for the enjoyment of the Field is that they should hold the beagle and his skill as subjects of supreme importance and as topics for never ending discussion.' He goes on to discuss the importance of dressing comfortably: 'An ill-fitting or too heavy pair of shoes, breeches which pinch behind the knee, or a stock which is tied too tightly - all these and others may completely ruin a day's sport and may even, if sufficiently bad, result in one's collapse, as I have seen happen more than once.' The next sentence, however, is dated and is of its time: 'In these days, when the old standards are declining, a feeling that 'any thing will do' is beginning to be apparent in field sports whether it is guns or beagling outfits, and there are those who turn out in the most astonishing accumulation of rags.' Colville's book also contains a fascinating chapter on hare hunting in the ancient world where Xenophon makes his appearance once again.

**Derek Fanning,
ROI Editor**

I really don't know what is happening but I would seem to be entering a second childhood — or so I have been told.

The reason appears to be that, just like years ago, I have gone fishing mad. To be more precise — trout fishing mad. Unlike last year when I got out for a couple of sessions early in the season and that was that, this time I am counting the minutes to get back on the river. I really can't explain the sudden resurgence of my 'angling mojo,' but it's happening.

Maybe I'm taking a wee bit longer to sit on the bank changing flies, taking in the beauty of the surroundings and watching birds like mallard and dipper going about their daily business. Rabbits too make an appearance as do common birds such as long tailed tits, a personal favourite, and finches. And yes for some reason the trout are coming to the net to be admired, and returned gently.

As usual, conversations are struck up with passing 'brothers of the angle' and, downstream, I am watching a garden pond taking shape near some houses built on the site of an old mill. It is an enviable location fitting entirely into the surrounding habitat which is very 'fishy' indeed and is a haven for birdlife.

Lunch - a packet of crisps in the pocket all those years ago — is now more substantial, and is taken a little more sedately. My fishing partner produces a couple of collapsible chairs from the boot and we sit, munching sandwiches and drinking tea, as the talk turns to angling our past angling escapades, mostly on the Bann at Banbridge. Thoughts turn to how the river fished then, the blue winged olive hatch that produced over 50 trout to one rod on a single stretch, all to be returned despite exceeding 'keeper' size. Names like Chris Downey - 'Christie' — float back as we talk about his cottage next the river, and the rods suspended above the back door not to be taken down till season's end. His quill-bodied olives and the Currans' Fancy, a mainly blue fly that worked like magic early in the season. Christie, sadly no longer with us, went on to become a renowned gillie in the west of Ireland, known to anglers the world over who came to Ireland to fish. We were privileged to have known him too.

Days gone by, names from the past and the fun chasing brown trout is as much a part of our angling day as actual fishing. Like the time Tommy M. caught his hook (we were worm fishing) on a bush and had to walk back, winding as he went for over 100 yards. Missing good fish, Mrs 'Evergreens' the source of crisps and Straghan's for the day tickets. Bourneville chocolate and a wee ciggie (we both smoked then) shared in the lea of a hedge talking nonsense come streaming back.

Both of us often can't remember why we came into the room or the name of the man we were introduced to five minutes ago, when it comes to fishy tales we are computer-like. Maybe we remember better the things that really matter.

Start them young and let them have-a go

I have often said that we need to get young people into the countryside to try their hand at countrysports — just to show them how it's done. Keep it simple, let them have-a-go, encourage their efforts and 'manage' to get them some early success. That way they can begin to build their own set of memories about the time that.....well you get my drift (no angling pun intended).

So why not bring them to the Angling Village at Shanes Castle to learn how to tie a fly under friendly, expert guidance, then take



them to the put and take fishing area to catch their first fish with the fly they've tied, and finally talk to celebrity chef Emmett McCourt to see how to cook it. What an opportunity to see for themselves what it's all about. What a chance for early success as well! I've no doubt that the whole thing will take pride of place in their countrysports memory bank.

A last thought - I can't recall ever meeting a child who looks back fondly on the day they were introduced to television.

Tight Lines - and see you all at Shanes Castle on 27th and 28th June 2015.

Lead shot 'news'

On a less happy topic, I expect that while the consideration over the use of lead shot is not exactly uppermost in the new government's mind at Westminster, nevertheless it rises to the surface at some time or other. I haven't heard too much on the subject since the UK sporting press published emails from someone within the LAG group, which appeared to indicate that the group, or at least the author of the emails, had moved to a position that lead shot should be done away with - and thus the advice to government could be just that if 'the author' had their way. Not much has been heard by me anyway from our representative organisations.

Only the 'anti-lead at all cost brigade' seem to be keeping the public informed of this 'lethal threat to animals, birds and probably mankind.' I almost choked on my cornflakes reading one such newspaper report on Facebook. It gave the usual 'facts' (unsubstantiated as usual) of the damage lead shot was doing right now. It seems that they had a hotline to the catastrophes which were — allegedly — happening on our doorstep all on account of lead shot ingestion on places such as bird sanctuaries. Yes, even there birds were to be found dying in numbers on account of lead shot ingestion.

I didn't see the news of this on television or come to that — anywhere. Did you? I should have thought that it would have made national coverage or (stifles yawn) Countryfile, unless it waserr.. fantasy. I was even more stunned to learn from the article that, after taking lead shot as they fed, swans could be seen to fly into trees — or was it pylons?

You know what - I guess that a percentage of their readers are now convinced about the 'resident evil' that is lead shot! Based on the factswho could think otherwise?

As for me, well I've yet to find a duck that's given up the ghost due to eating lead shot. Hit by lead shot — yes. And as for collapsing swans, I hope to have a camera with me if it happens.

Maybe the representative organisations should take more account of this drip feed of paranoid anti-lead shot propaganda and deal with it when it arises. Maybe they did in this case, but it went unreported. As I mentioned it was there on Facebook along with the 'expert' quotes and I know that most if not all of the organisations use social media.

No ban on lead shot without irrefutable evidence! That was what was said right at the commencement of the Lead Advisory Group. In the meantime could you move your public relations machine (paid for by members) into action before it's too late.

Meanwhile - mind those falling swans!

Paul Pringle
Northern Editor

Barbour's Countrywear Goes From Strength to Strength



Mens Classic Countrywear - Funnel Neck Sweat

For those who live, work or just enjoy being in the country, Barbour's countrywear collections are a must for any wardrobe. Casual jackets, jerseys, shirts and tees for men and women are practical and stylish, designed especially for the outdoor life.

Men's jackets such as the Durham in both wax cotton and a lightweight waterproof breathable fabric are ideal for walking. The cotton Washed Utility Casual jacket offers light protection on chilly days and has plenty of pockets for mobile phones, wallets and dog leads. Knitwear is 100% lambswool and there's a choice of checks and Tattersall shirts, polo and rugby shirts ideal for weekend wear.

As part of Barbour's long-standing connection with all things equestrian, this season introduces a new Equestrian Collection for Women. Traditional Tattersall checks and horse print linings are perfect for horse enthusiasts, whilst elasticated panels and breathable fabrics make the collection ideal for recreational riders.

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

The new Countrywear collections from Barbour are perfect for those who live, work or play in the countryside, whatever the weather!

For stockists, please visit www.barbour.com or call 0044 191 427 4210

(Right) Womens Equestrian - Dressage WB Jacket & Saddle Polo.





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The New X5(i) rifle scope from SWAROVSKI OPTIK

From September 2015 there will be three different models (X5(i)) available from selected specialist retailers, offering specific reticles and an optional personalised extreme cam (PXC).

Uncompromising precision

Precision is the number one condition for long-range shooting, including for the X5(i). Using the turrets and the spring retention system, you can adjust the impact point to your exact requirements with the X5(i). The innovative spring retention system enables the X5(i) rifle scope to reach a very large adjustment range of up to 116 MOA. The parallax turret enables you to adjust the parallax perfectly to the relevant shooting distance.

Uncompromising optics

Designed to meet the highest requirements, the X5(i) from SWAROVSKI OPTIK offers maximum optical performance across the whole magnification range. Its large field of view facilitates rapid target acquisition over long distances. The high image quality and high-contrast reticle allow you to make out every detail, meaning that the X5(i) sets the benchmark in terms of optical quality.

Rugged and reliable

Every X5(i) rifle scope is crafted from the finest materials and undergoes the most stringent quality control checks. The X5(i) range is reliable and impressive thanks to its absolute repeating accuracy – shot after shot, group after group. The X5(i) can also withstand extreme impacts unscathed.

Multiple reticles

The X5(i) illumination unit offers 10 different illumination levels.

SWAROVSKI OPTIK's New EL Range of Binoculars

The binoculars have been further enhanced based on the experience gained from daily use, offer innovative features, and have been perfectly designed down to the smallest detail. Optics, design, and ergonomics are in perfect harmony with each other. Comfort and functionality have been taken one step further.

Innovation inspired by experience

The huge challenges posed by hunting in the mountains and long-range hunting in particular leave no room for compromise. Thanks simply to razor-sharp images combined with highly accurate range and angle measurements, you can achieve an accurately placed shot every time.

Design and functionality in even closer harmony

SWAROVSKI OPTIK has developed the new FieldPro package, which takes user-



friendliness to a new level. The new rotating strap connector with a cord adapts perfectly to any movement. The bayonet catch enables you to fit and switch the carrying strap and accessories very quickly and flexibly. With a simple turn of the practical quick catch button you can rapidly and silently adjust the carrying strap to the right length. You can easily feel and accurately operate the new, distinctive measurement button, even when wearing gloves.

Perfect ergonomic design means comfortable use

Taking accurate measurements at long distances requires the utmost steadiness. This is why EL Range binoculars are particularly light and have a perfectly balanced weight. At 880 g (10x42) and 895 g (8x42) respectively, they are the lightest in their class. Ergonomically arranged operating features, such as the improved measurement button, allow you to take reliable measurements in comfort, including for extremely far away targets, and even with one hand.

Proven optics allowing you to observe every detail

The sophisticated EL Range binoculars with their integrated range and angle finder provide a large field of view (8x42: 137 m / 10x42: 110 m) and impressive transmission values (91%) in both barrels. High image quality, neutral colour, and the reduction of scattered light are guaranteed as well as bright, high-contrast images and the best detail recognition in any situation.

Tried-and-tested technology for accurate measurement

Thanks to the integrated laser-rangefinder and SWAROAIM technology with an integrated tilt indicator and unique angle shot program, key parameters such as angle and range to target as well as the corrected shooting distance are available at any time. This enables you to quickly determine and make appropriate adjustments (using clicks with the BT or PBC/bars with long-range reticles) for shots at an angle and over longer distances. With externalised electronics (in the shape of fins) and the projection of information, SWAROVSKI OPTIK deploys a technology that guarantees top optical performance without any compromise. You can take measurements over distances from 30 to 1,375 meters.



All you need to achieve the perfect hit: EL Range – X5(i) – STR

When it comes to long-range shooting, it is crucial to have perfect and totally reliable equipment. This is where the EL Range binoculars, X5(i) rifle scope, and STR spotting scope with reticle from SWAROVSKI OPTIK are in complete harmony.

FieldPro package

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Discounted Entry to Shanes Castle and Birr Castle Game Fairs - Exclusive Offer for CAI Members

Countryside Alliance Ireland is delighted to announce that we have procured tickets on behalf of our members to attend the Game Fairs at Shanes Castle (Saturday 27 & Sunday 28 June 2015) and Birr Castle (Saturday 29 & Sunday 30 August 2015).

So we are offering two adult entry tickets for the price of one. Two adult tickets for £10!

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

At Shanes Castle, our marquee will play host to the British Deer Society (NI) and PAW NI and to the Wild Deer Association of Ireland, The Irish Red Grouse Association Conservation Trust and The Irish Fly Fishing and Game Shooting Museum at Birr Castle.

CAI Chief Executive, Lyall Plant, comments: "The Great Game Fairs of Ireland are the perfect forum for CAI to meet and chat with our members and supporters. The Fairs offer something for all of the family and we are once again delighted to have a significant presence at these events and to be playing such a vital part."

Discounted tickets must be ordered in advance through the CAI offices, they cannot be purchased at the Fairs. Tickets for Shanes Castle are available to order now!

To avail of this superb offer, please contact our NI office on +44 28 9263 9911 quoting your membership number and we can take payment by debit or credit card. Last date for ordering discounted tickets to ensure delivery is Tuesday 23 June 2015. No exceptions.

(Birr Castle tickets will be available for order from the beginning of July – we shall keep you updated.)

Firearm Licensing Meeting hosted by Frances Fitzgerald, Minister for Justice and Equality

On Wednesday 29 April, CAI attended a meeting hosted by the Justice Minister, Frances Fitzgerald in Dublin. The purpose of the meeting was to engage with key stakeholders to outline the Interim Report and to discuss the recommendations contained therein.

Lyall Plant was in attendance and reiterated our recommendation that a centralised licensing system should be established which would help end the inconsistent approach that we currently see. In addition, CAI supported the act of ballistic testing for all short firearms but insisted the cost should be borne by An Garda Síochána, as it is in NI by the PSNI.

The Minister will now consider what has been voiced and discuss with her officials on the way forward. We shall keep you updated.

Summer Activities

Summer is upon us again and whilst that spells the hibernation of many shooting and hunting sports, it simply creates an opportunity to try new activities or revisit old ones.

If you are already mourning the loss of your regular hunting and shooting during the closed seasons, why not try a different country sport. There are many angling clubs throughout Ireland that would be more than pleased to welcome you to the sport. Ireland is famed for its rich and diverse angling waters and it would be hard to find a better place to get you hooked on angling!

There are many different websites that can offer advice including the Ulster Angling Federation, or one of our trade members, Cleere's Angling Centre's website can be accessed via the Countryside Alliance Ireland website.

For those equestrians out there, many of the hunts run hunter trials in the spring/summer and these are always a great way to keep your hunters fit and entertained until their summer lay off. For those that enjoy the break from hunting and like to keep their feet firmly on the ground throughout the summer months, why not visit the last remaining point-to-points that will continue into June. This is a great way to support Irish hunts, whilst experiencing an enjoyable day out with family or friends.

COUNTRYSIDE ALLIANCE IRELAND

Love the countryside

Game shooting may be over for the season but that doesn't mean that there aren't a multitude of other shooting sports that can be enjoyed. Clay pigeon clubs are thriving over the summer and many clubs use this break to hold shooting competitions.

The Wild Deer Association of Ireland is holding a cross border competition in the coming months and more information about this can be gained by contacting the Association via their website or facebook page.

Regardless of what activity you chose to occupy yourself over the summer, CAI hopes you have an enjoyable, safe and successful few months.

For us here at Countryside Alliance Ireland, summer mostly means the preparation for and attendance at various game and country sports fairs. These are events we always look forward to, as we relish the chance to meet our members and answer any questions face to face.

This year, the first fair we are attending is the NI Countrysports Fair which is being held at the new venue of Scarvagh House, Scarva, Co. Down over the weekend of 6 and 7 June 2015. For more information please visit the NI Countrysports website at <http://www.countrysportsfairs.com/>

Our next event will be the Irish Game Fair at Shanes Castle on 27 and 28 June 2015. As always this promises to be a vibrant and fun packed weekend.

The final game fair will be the Irish Game & Country Fair at Birr Castle on 29 and 30 August 2015. Birr Castle is a spectacular venue and the crowds ensure that the CAI team is kept busy throughout the weekend.

Whatever fair you visit, please do call into the Countryside Alliance Ireland stand, say 'hello' and get up to date with all the latest news.

CAI Engages with Politicians and Councillors

Countryside Alliance Ireland has written to all of Northern Ireland's MLAs (Members of the Legislative Assembly) and Councillors, following the Alliance's Party's recently tabled Private Members' Motion which categorises the use of wild animals in circuses with hunting, snares and the use of electronic dog collars.

In our correspondence, we included some additional information on wildlife management methods, in the hope that some of our political representatives might become more educated and informed in matters they may not have dealt with before.

We cannot expect all MLAs and Councillors to be experts in the field



Chief Executive Lyall Plant discussing country sports issues with Jim Shannon MP.

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of country sports and vermin control and therefore our aim was to hopefully offer information that was useful and to open lines of communication for the future.

We have so far received a variety of responses, some which have been very positive. Whilst we can't expect everyone to share our views, we greatly appreciate all those who have responded and hope to be able to work with many of them in the future.

Countryside Alliance Ireland continuously liaises with politicians both in Stormont and the Dail, to strive to protect the future of country sports and our members' interests. By the time you read this, the General Election in the UK will be over and we will have 18 elected MPs in NI. Of course we hope that the majority of these MPs will be supportive and respectful in matters concerning the rural community and country sports but if necessary, Countryside Alliance Ireland is on hand to remind them!

Advice on Keeping Gundogs Safe

There seem to have been a raft of gundog thefts of late. Facebook and Twitter are excellent ways of publicising thefts, and there are also a number of websites you can use should your working pets be stolen.



No one wants their dog stolen

On the Countryside Alliance website (www.countryside-alliance.org) we bring you our advice and we hope you will never have to experience this horrendous crime. The recent theft of spaniels Skye and Ruby in Essex led to a huge social media campaign that made the dogs too hot to handle and we are pleased to report they are now home and safe. Let's do the same in Ireland.

Tattersalls - Offer for CAI Members

This year Countryside Alliance Ireland is again pleased to be able to offer our members discounted tickets for the Tattersalls International Horse Trials and Country Fair.

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

Located in Ratoath, Co. Meath, this event attracts the top names in the sport. Spanning 5 days, it combines world class eventing (dressage, cross country and show jumping) with all the bustle of a Country Fair. The thrilling cross country, Country Fair and all the children's entertainment are on the Friday, Saturday and Sunday.

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Coucon – the ultimate in personal waterproofing — is at Shanes Castle 27th and 28th June



We asked the company how the idea arose for creating Coucon: "The idea for the Coucon came one cold damp November afternoon, when standing on a beach, drenched to the bone and shivering with the cold winds, waiting to surf with my two sons. I thought to myself that there must be something to keep the elements at bay.

"I wanted clothing that would be able to keep me dry and warm in extreme conditions, shielding me from foul weather without impeding movement. I looked online first and found nothing but cotton robes, these were incredibly unsuitable for Irish and UK conditions, only somewhat insulating the wearer and, even then, only until the rain came.

"Dissatisfied with the available products, I took the idea that had formed in my head that cold November afternoon and began to refine it, designing a garment that would do all I required of it while retaining a high level of versatility."

Cosy and dry no matter what!

"The Coucon became the final product which acts as your own personal cocoon (in fact 'Coucon' is the French word for cocoon). The Coucon keeps the user cosy and dry no matter the weather.

"It's an incredibly versatile outdoor robe designed for many pursuits, including fishing, camping, surfing, and it's very suitable for outdoor concerts and much more.

"The Coucon features a lightweight water-resistant PU polyester exterior to offer substantial protection from the elements without becoming cumbersome, while the interior is designed for optimum comfort with a 100% spun polyester simulated Lamb's Wool with an anti-pill finish. The hood features a zip and extended pull to allow adjustment to suit any individual, and the slider-zipped arm openings ensures the Coucon can be worn without inhibiting movement.

"The Coucon is available in both adult and children sizes in five colours: Navy, Burgundy, Olive, Black and Camouflage. The protection and comfort it gives make it suitable for a multitude of activities. There is no end to the list of situations where this versatile piece of clothing can prove itself irreplaceable."

If you are looking for personal water proofing please visit their stand at The Game Fair at Shanes Castle. See www.couconoutdoor.com for more

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Sports Coalition Meeting with Minister for Justice & Equality and Commissioner of An Garda Síochána

The Sports Coalition representatives were Des Crofton (NARGC and Spokesperson for the Sports Coalition), Paul Walsh (Firearms Dealer), Victor Quirke, (Irish Bullseye Association), Mick Tope (NASRPC), Mark Maguire (Harbour House Range), Gerry McCarthy (WA1500 Association) and Sean Gilliland (Range Operator).

The Minister welcomed all and invited each party attending or representing an association at the meeting to introduce themselves.

We could not let the occasion pass without remarking that the meeting had been a long time coming and indeed should have come long before the number of court challenges reached the levels they did. We outlined that it is set against a background of the goalposts having been unfairly moved by the Gardai over the past six years. We instanced the agreement on the Annex F list and the letters of encouragement from senior Garda Officers to apply for firearms which it is now being contended are restricted and therefore no longer licensable. We pointed out it is an act of extreme bad faith for the Gardai to be issuing pre-populated forms inviting people to renew their firearms certificates while knowing that a blanket policy to refuse will be applied.

There have now been almost 700 court cases with every single one seeking no more than compliance with the legislation. It should be noted that none of the court challenges sought to widen the scope of availability of firearms or sought a reduction in the criteria to be met. By the end of 2009, following the consultations and eventual enactment of the new legislation, the Department of Justice and An Garda Síochána had a very valuable prize in their hands – the respect and confidence of all representative associations. But it is a matter of record that the respect and confidence achieved evaporated in the months and years following as a direct result of the actions of An Garda Síochána and inaction by the Department of Justice. Without going into more specific detail, which I believe would be unhelpful at this point, we would like to set out how the member associations of the Sports Coalition see matters being resolved.

Firstly, there are some general matters in the Justice Committee's Interim Report we wish to comment on. The Joint Report of the Department of Justice and An Garda Síochána is predicated on the notion that a great many firearms are stolen from the homes of licence holders and end up in the hands of criminals in the commission of crimes and the Gardai have provided statistical data which they claim backs up that assertion. However, the figures as presented give anything but a true reflection of what firearms have been stolen from the homes of licence holders and quite frankly, the statistics published lack credibility and there is no other way to put that. At the meeting on the 29th, the Garda Commissioner, in the face of our comments on the credibility of the Garda statistics on stolen firearms, clarified that the correct figure for firearms stolen over the relevant four year period was 1,100 firearms and not 1,710 as previously published. This is of course more than a 50% margin of error! But more importantly and worrying is the fact that the figures have been presented in a way which demonises firearms owners in the eyes of the public. Others have published an analysis already of the statistics and both the Department and the Gardai are well aware of that. If the statistics show anything at all it is that the security arrangements where they are implemented are working very well. Set against the background of how the figures have been presented, we welcome the acknowledgement of the Oireachtas Committee of the responsibility and professionalism of firearms owners and we particularly welcome their caution against comparing licensed firearms owners with criminal activity



Des Crofton, NARGC and Spokesperson for the Sports Coalition

and we urge everyone to kindly take note of that.

On behalf of the Sports Coalition, we welcomed of the Interim Report of the Oireachtas Justice Committee as the first unbiased and objective consideration of the issues and difficulties around firearms ownership in this country. That is not to say we can agree with everything in the Interim Report - we do not, but there is much we can agree with and we do believe the general direction and approach of the Justice Committee is the correct one and we welcome the Report for those reasons.

Turning to the specific recommendations in the Justice Committee's Report:

1. The Committee strongly recommends that the Minister requests that the Garda Inspectorate carry out an independent review of the current firearms licensing regime;

It seems to us that this is just the beginning, or at least it should be. The Justice Committee has confirmed it is continuing with its work and we believe intends, when finished, to issue a final report. The Committee has also strongly recommended that the administration of the licensing system be referred to the Garda Inspectorate. There is much to recommend this course. If we are to attempt to fix whatever problems are in the system, it seems to us to be sensible that we know what problems we should fix from an objective assessment by an independent body. The Sports Coalition had been calling for the Inspectorate to examine these issues for some time. The Minister said she wished to first examine some matters concerning the terms of reference of the Inspectorate.

2. The Minister should establish a national firearms control and advisory licensing authority with an associated central database also accessible by an Garda Síochána;

We agree with this recommendation in principle, especially the concept of a centralised licensing system which will undoubtedly deliver consistency of approach and much needed knowledge over time, not to mention increased efficiency. We are on record as calling for this previously. However, we are totally opposed to any idea that the administration of a centralised system would rest within and under the control of An Garda Síochána and we made that clear at the meeting. We agree that the Gardai should be the sole body in charge of character vetting - arguably the most important and critical aspect of assessment for suitability for a firearms certificate. As such, an applicant for a firearms certificate should first be required to obtain a "character clearance certificate" from the Gardai before even applying for a firearms certificate. This model has huge benefits. No records of any nature which might be regarded as confidential or of operational nature are required to be passed to anyone outside the Gardai. The clearance certificate, if refused is a matter between the would-be applicant and the Gardai exclusively and does not involve the licensing authority. This system would reduce the scope for argument and litigation substantially without compromising public safety.

We agree in principle with the other proposed functions of a National Licensing Authority albeit that much of how they would work needs to be discussed and given greater definition and relevance in the Irish context.

3. A ballistics record of all license firearms should be created and maintained;

While we accept the sentiment behind this recommendation, we believe it is not possible, practical or proportionate for all firearms and I believe there was general agreement on this. The focus here should be on those firearms which appear to be of concern i.e. short firearms.



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4. The Committee recommends that the licensing of .22 calibre short firearms and centre fire semi-automatic rifles be temporarily restricted;

This is currently the most contentious and urgent issue as those firearms affected are currently commencing renewal and renewals will intensify in the second half of the year. We do not accept that any justifiable case has been made to restrict or ban .22 calibre short firearms. The simple test is amply illustrated by (a) the number of such firearms as have been stolen from the homes of licence holders since 2009 when the new security arrangements came into force and (b) of the tiny number stolen, the number which have been established as having been used in the subsequent commission of a crime. We reminded the Minister that we have called for an independent risk assessment where the banning and/or restriction of any firearm is being contemplated and we outlined how this assessment could take place. We said that the issue of the status of currently licensed .22 calibre short firearms and the future licensing of these firearms is of the utmost importance to the Sports Coalition. We made clear there are no circumstances in which the Sports Coalition will accept a ban or cap in any form, whether through the front door, the back door or any other door, of .22 calibre handguns or any existing firearms for sporting purposes. If there is a ban or cap, while we must obey the law, there will be very significant political consequences.

We had already made a submission to the Justice Committee as to how the current impasse involving .22 calibre short firearms can be resolved i.e. that .22 calibre firearms with barrel lengths of not less than 5 inches, suitable for competition under ISSF rules and with a magazine capacity of not more than 10 rounds be licensed. We have also suggested that this criteria should be regarded as also including existing Olympic short firearms (including where the barrel length is shorter as the Gardai have stated they do not have a problem with these). The criteria suggested are prescriptive and will remove the adversarial system which has developed resulting in so many court cases. There is absolutely no case to be made for restricting these firearms and we pointed to the relatively small number licensed nationally over the past 11 years since short firearms became licensable again. In addition, the notion that so-called Olympic style short firearms are somehow less lethal than any or all those currently licensed is an absolute fiction and has no basis in fact. Anything which can be done with any of the .22 short firearms currently licensed can also be done with any of the so-called Olympic style guns without exception.

5. The Committee recommends that all firearms be stored in a gun safe;

The IFA made a strong case that farmers with just one shotgun who have to defend their stock from predators and roaming dogs, particularly at night, need to have quick access to their firearms and this was accepted and supported by all of the shooting associations.

6. It is recommended that holders of restricted firearms are required to

have time control locks fitted to their gun safes only allowing access at pre-determined times;

While on the face of it, this appears a worthwhile move, we suggest it is neither practical nor in fact workable and the costs for licence holders would be prohibitive. There was a general acceptance of this.

7. The Committee recommends the establishment of a structured and graduated licensing scheme.

We suggested that this has merit and the details and structure should be worked out with the relevant shooting associations in due course but with exceptions in specific circumstances.

We also addressed some matters on which the Justice Committee had made no comment. Head 2 of the Joint Report of the Garda Síochána and Department of Justice seeks to amend Section 4 of the Firearms Act 1925 by the granting of new powers of refusal of a firearms licence application based on: Proliferation, Calibre, Velocity of ammunition, Size and shape (appearance) of the firearm and Lethality of the firearm. We vehemently oppose this amendment as being grossly disproportionate and wide open to abuse. In fact we would regard this recommendation as a charter for refusing reasonable applications and in coming to this conclusion we are conscious of the many occasions these reasons have been attempted by licensing officers already but which have been struck down by the courts as being unreasonable. We suggest there are sufficient powers within the legislation currently to address any concerns.

A further matter we raised is the issue of penalties. We are at a loss to understand the absence of any mention of amendment to penalties in the Report of the Joint Working Group and the Justice Committee's Interim Report. We have made a submission on this to the Committee. We do suggested there is a glaring omission and it is the absence of a special offence of "Theft of Firearm". The creation of such an offence would be a meaningful contribution to public safety and send out the right message. This was supported by the IFA in particular.

We asked the Minister if it is intended that the meeting constitutes the entirety of the promised consultation in view of the complexity of the issues to be addressed. She said that she intended to take all the views and contributions into consideration before deciding what next to do.

Finally, we invited the Minister to visit Harbour House Target Shooting Range to see first-hand how organised sports shooting is managed and conducted and the safety procedures which apply. We noted that the Chairman and members of the Justice Committee had acknowledged how helpful and enlightening they found their visit to Harbour House and we had no doubt a visit would be of great benefit to the Minister's considerations also.

We thanked her for the opportunity to put forward our initial views and we look forward to the next steps.



Kaz Balinsky (Commercial estate shoot manager, Wicklow) and Sports Coalition members Des Crofton; Victor Quirke; Mick Tope; Paul Walsh; Mark Maguire; Sean Gilliland and Gerry McCarthy.



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MOUNTAIN HARES ON THE MARCH AFTER GROUSE BONANZA

The Highlands are celebrating a special conservation bonus following two very good grouse seasons. Scottish moorland managers are reporting large numbers of the much loved and easily recognised mountain hare, linked to last year's 'best in a generation' grouse season. The Scottish population of hares is thought to be around 350,000 and in some areas they are now at historically high levels – the hares have the red grouse to thank!

Concern has been expressed recently that hare numbers may be going down; however grouse moors in the Angus Glens, Speyside and Highlands report that their numbers have increased along with grouse levels. Heather moorland managed for red grouse is an extremely good habitat for hares to thrive on. The mountain hare is the only native species of hare or rabbit in Britain, easily distinguished by its white plumage during the winter months and brown during the summer. It is known that its population fluctuates in 7-10 year cycles, however actively managed moorlands give this iconic Scottish species a sustainable future.

Population growth

Danny Lawson, head gamekeeper on Glenogil Estate in the Angus Glens, said: "I have seen more mountain hares this year than at any time since I came here. Our mountain hare population has been increasing along with grouse over the last three years because our heather management gives them good grazing and because of predator control over the estate and other neighbouring estates. Good weather in the

breeding season helps mountain hare numbers and the last two seasons, 2013 and 2014, have been very good for both grouse and mountain hares. Like grouse, mountain hare populations have to be carefully managed. Culling is legal and is necessary in some circumstances and such management should be done sustainably and be supported by a sound management plan."

Tim Baynes, Director of the Scottish Moorland Group, says:

"There are surprising gaps in our collective knowledge about this secretive animal. This can lead to assumptions about population changes which are not correct and we support the research project commissioned by Scottish Natural Heritage to get a better handle on how to accurately count hares on the open hill. What does seem certain from the long term observations of moorland managers on the ground is that there is a strong link to land use; hare numbers are likely to go down where moorland is unmanaged or afforested but will increase where managed for red grouse."



Mountain hare numbers have increased.

BALLYDUFF BRIDGE SALMON FISHERIES



A great day with Ballyduff Bridge Salmon Fisheries.

This fishery on the lower Munster Blackwater is set in the beautiful countryside of the Blackwater Valley at Ballyduff Bridge - just 30 miles from Cork and seven miles from both Fermoy and Lismore.

The Fishery has four beats - two at Ballyduff Bridge and two further up river at Ballincurragh. Fly fishing is encouraged wherever possible on all beats, but spinning and occasional bait fishing are permitted when conditions allow and are authorised by the two professional gillies who manage the Fishery.

The season to date has been somewhat mixed. March was generally a good month with quite a few fish caught, mostly on spinner due to the consistently high water levels. Some springers are now coming through and the season looks promising with hopefully a good mid season to late run.

Maurice Cahill and Connie Corcoran, two highly experienced and well known local gillies manage the fish-ery and are usually on hand to assist guests — whether experienced or just beginners. Expert tuition is also available if required.

Rates to fish are very competitive and seasonal offers are available and also day tickets to full membership. The village of Ballyduff is very peaceful and quiet with a good shop for most provisions and several pubs for relaxation; plenty of restaurants also nearby in Fermoy and Lismore.

For more information and some of the finest salmon fishing on the Munster Backwater, the Fishery welcome your enquiries - Maurice Cahill on 00353(0)873317175 or email gofish.maurice@gmail.com and Connie Corcoran on 00353(0)876918230 or email connieghillie@gmail.com or visit our web-site www.blackwatersalmon.ie or find us on Facebook.

From John Wray of the Shooting NI group on Facebook comes a most interesting report from the British Trust for Ornithology on a ringed bird which he shot.



Dear John Wray

Thank you for taking the time to report to us details of a bird ring you found. Information about this bird and its movements is given below.

Ringling Scheme. London Ring Number **LH34100** Species of bird. **Snipe** (Gaffinago *gafnago*)

This bird was ringed by Grampian RG as age 1st year, sex unknown on 08-Nov-2014 18:00:00 at Meikle Tarty, near Ellon, Aberdeenshire, UK OS Map reference NJ9927 accuracy 0, co-ordinates 57deg 20min N 2deg 1mm W accuracy 0.

It was found on 26-Dec-2014 time unknown at Church Road, Tullyally, Londonderry, UK OS Map reference IC4413 accuracy 0, co-ordinates 54deg 58min N 7deg 19min W accuracy 0. **Finding condition:** Freshly dead **Finding circumstances:** Shot Extra information: It was found 48 days after it was ringed, 421 km from the ringling site, direction SW.

Bird Ringling in Britain & Ireland is organised by the British Trust for Ornithology (BTO). Each year over 900,000 birds are ringed by over 2,500 highly trained bird ringers, most of whom are volunteers. They follow a careful training process that can take several years to complete to ensure that they have the necessary skills to catch and ring birds. The bird's welfare is always the most important consideration during ringling activities.

Ringling began over 100 years ago to study the movements of birds. While it continues to generate information about movements, it also allows us to study how many young birds leave the nest and survive to breed as adults, as well as how many adults live from year to year and how many birds disperse to different breeding sites. Collection of this information helps us to understand why bird populations increase or decrease - vital information for conservation. Details of how many birds have been caught and where and when they have been found are available on the BTO website at www.bto.org/ringing-report.

Some interesting facts discovered from ringling data:

Oldest bird - Manx shearwater, 50 yrs 11 months

Furthest travelled - Arctic Tern from Wales to Australia 18,000 km

Strangest - Osprey ring found in stomach of a crocodile in Gambia!

Many thanks again for reporting this bird and contributing to the work of the Ringling Scheme. Find out more about the BTO visit www.bto.org.

With best wishes The Ringling Team

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50th Anniversary for Labrador Club of Northern Ireland

The Labrador Retriever Club of Northern Ireland celebrates its 50th Anniversary this year. Club Chairman Richard Johnston will produce a history of the club for this magazine later in the year but Irish Country Sports and Country Life magazine and the Irish Game Fair thought we should mark this anniversary

by donating £50 to the BIS at the club Show and £50 for the top score at the club test on the 20th June at Clandeboyne. In addition we will sponsor a FREE TICKET to the Game Fair at Shanes Castle, Antrim on the 27th & 28th June to all entrants in this anniversary test.

7th June Labrador Club of NI Charity Working Test

Sunday 7th June is the date for a unique Retriever Working Test organised by the Labrador Club of NI - an A.V. Retriever Charity working test in aid of the Alzheimer's Society, NI will take place at Newtowncrommelin, by kind permission of Mr. R. Blackiston-Houston and Gamekeeper.

JUDGES: Nigel Carville (A), Eddie Finn (A), Michael McKee (B) and Stephen McKelvey (NP).

MEET: Unclassified and Novice: 09.00hrs at the Skerries inn, Newtowncrommelin. BT43 6RJ

Open: 13.00hrs at the Skerries Inn, Newtowncrommelin. BT43 6RJ.

Postcode for ground: Altnarichard Road, BT53 8XT.

ENTRY FEES: £8 per dog.

PRIZES:

Open 1st: Scottish Woodlands Perpetual Cup; 1 day of shooting for two guns-half day on woodcock and half day on snipe, courtesy of Blakiston-Houston Estates; 2 tickets to the Irish Game Fair in Shanes Castle and an annual subscription to Irish Countrysports and Country Life magazine, courtesy of Albert Titterington; Feedwell dog food; Rosette.

2nd Feedwell dog food, slip lead, courtesy of Pawlines, Rosette.

3rd Feedwell dog food, slip lead, courtesy of Pawlines, Rosette.

4th Rosette.

Novice: 1st Kingsmill Perpetual Cup; 1 day of shooting for two guns -half day on woodcock and half day on snipe, courtesy of Blakiston-Houston Estates; 2 tickets to the Irish Game Fair in Shanes Castle and an annual subscription to Irish Countrysports and Country Life magazine, courtesy of Albert Titterington; Feedwell dog food; Slip lead, courtesy of Pawlines; Rosette.

2nd Feedwell dog food, slip lead, courtesy of Pawlines, Rosette.

3rd Feedwell dog food, slip lead, courtesy of Pawlines, Rosette.

4th Rosette.

Unclassified: 1st Glens Farm Supplies Perpetual Cup; 2 tickets to the Irish Game Fair in Shanes Castle and an annual subscription to Irish Countrysports and Country Life magazine, courtesy of Albert Titterington; £50 voucher for use at Lavin Guns, courtesy of Lavin Guns; Feedwell dog food; Slip lead, courtesy of Pawlines; Rosette.

2nd Feedwell dog food, Slip lead, courtesy of Pawlines, Rosette.

3rd Feedwell dog food, Slip lead, courtesy of Pawlines, Rosette.

4th Rosette.

Special Prizes: BASC trophy for top overall scoring dog (across unclassified, novice and open), sponsored by BASC NI; Countryside Alliance Ireland Shield for top Countryside Alliance member's dog in the open working test, sponsored by Countryside Alliance Ireland and a number of raffle prizes sponsored by Jolleys, McNeil Hardware and Derek Anderson.

Donations for the charity will be gratefully received on the day. Cheques made payable to the "Alzheimer's Society NI," please!

Thanks to the landowners, gamekeepers and our sponsors, Scottish Woodlands, BASC NI, Countryside Alliance Ireland, Glens farm supplies, Kingsmill, Feedwell, Jolleys, Pawlines, Lavin Guns, Albert Titterington & the Irish Game Fair & Irish Country Sports and Country Life Magazine, McNeil Hardware and Derek Anderson.

Labrador Club of Northern Ireland Gundog Test, Saturday 20th June, at Clandeboyne

JUDGES: Martin Rush (A), Simon Parke (B) and Roy J Rankin (N/P)

MEET: Unclassified & Novice: 09.00hrs at Ballyleidy Sawmills, Clandeboyne.

Open: 13.00hrs at Ballyleidy Sawmills, Clandeboyne

ENTRY FEES: £10 for first dog, £5 per dog thereafter. Entry fee includes: Barbecue lunch, refreshments, One entry ticket per handler for the Game Fair at Shanes Castle, sponsored by the Irish Countrysports and Country Life magazine.

PRIZES: Open: 1st Tony Kent Trophy,

Sporting Saint training pack (worth £25), Feedwell dog food & a rosette; 2nd& 3rd Feedwell dog food & a rosette; 4th rosette

Novice: 1st Frances Doherty Shield, Sporting Saint training pack (worth £25), Feedwell dog food & a rosette; 2nd& 3rd Feedwell dog food & a rosette 4th Rosette

Unclassified: 1st Marquis Trophy, Sporting Saint training pack (worth £25), Feedwell dog food & a rosette ; 2nd& 3rd Feedwell dog food & a rosette; 4th Rosette

Breed team challenge: Labradors v Golden Retrievers: 1st Sporting Saint Training packs (worth £25)

Special Prizes: £50 for top overall scoring dog (across unclassified, novice and open), sponsored by Irish Countrysports and Country Life magazine; Photoshoot courtesy of Darren Brown Photography; A number of raffle prizes

Thanks to the landowners, gamekeepers and our sponsors, Sporting Saint, Feedwell, Irish Country Sports and Country Life magazine & Darren Brown Photography.

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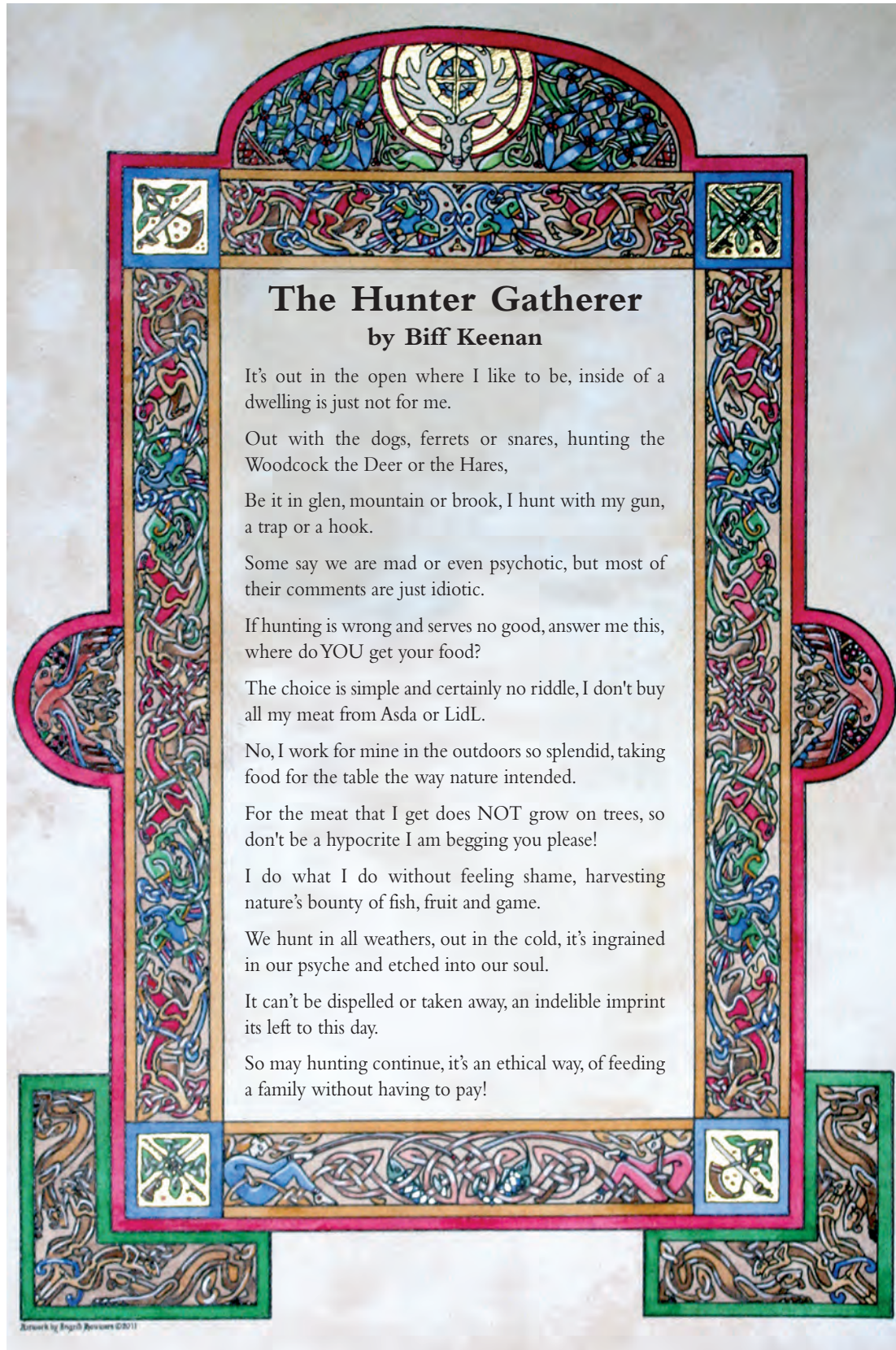
The Facebook group Shooting NI ran a poetry competition for its members which revealed a number of budding countryside poets are amongst us.

The winner - The Hunter Gatherer was chosen by the group's administrator and founder John Warrener Wray but our publisher Albert Titterington thought many others showed great effort or even a wicked turn of phrase and sportingly put up some prizes of tickets to Ireland's greatest



country sports event The Irish Game Fair at Shanes Castle on the 27th & 28th June.

The winner Biff Keenan received some highly sought after Shooting NI products; a year's subscription to Irish Country Sports & Country Life - Ireland's most read hunting, shooting and fishing magazine; two tickets to the Game Fair at Shanes Castle, and a framed copy of his poem illustrated by well known artist and taxidermist Ingrid Houwers.



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County Antrim – host to the Irish Game Fair and Fine Food Festival

Co Antrim is a county of massive contrasts from the beautiful glens of Antrim to the lush farmland surrounding Ballymena with its great shopping . From the beautiful coast road to the significant history surrounding Carrickfergus with its Castle and back to Antrim (or Antroim from the Irish meaning ‘lone ridge’) there is much to see and do and what better time to visit the county for a few days than around the time of arguably Antrim county’s largest event – the Irish Game Fair at Shanes Castle on the 27th & 28th June.



*Per angusta ad augusta
Through Trial to Triumph*

The antiquities of the county consist of cairns, mounts or forts, remains of ecclesiastical and military structures, and round towers.

There are three round towers: one at Antrim, one at Armoy, and one on Ram's Island in Lough Neagh, only that at Antrim being perfect. There are some remains of the ecclesiastic

establishments at Bonamargy, where the earls of Antrim are buried, Kells, Glenarm, Glynn, Muckamore and Whiteabbey.

The castle at Carrickfergus, dating from the Norman invasion of Ireland, is one of the best preserved medieval structures in Ireland. There are, however, remains of other ancient

castles, as Olderfleet, Cam's, Shane's, Glenarm, Garron Tower, Red Bay, and Dunluce Castle, notable for its dramatic location on a rocky outcrop.

Antrim Town described as ... the Jewel of the Lough

The Game Fair host town of Antrim and the Borough of Antrim and



Clotworthy House has not only beautiful gardens but is the home of the Massereene Hound.

Antrim & Newtownabbey

the perfect starting point or journey's end



Newtownabbey is the gateway to one of the world's greatest road journeys, the Causeway Coastal Route. Situated on the idyllic shoreline of Belfast Lough, it provides the perfect stopping off point for visitors preparing to steer a path through this land of myth and majestic beauty. Antrim is the gateway to Lough Neagh, the largest fresh water lake in the British Isles, captivating visitors with its tranquil atmosphere and Christian heritage.

With stunning scenery and a palpable sense of history, both Antrim and Newtownabbey offer visitors a fascinating blend of old and new. Nowhere exemplifies this more than the two stunning Lough Shore Parks in Antrim and Jordanstown, both offering fantastic five star

caravan and camping facilities complementing the area's natural resources. Let the stresses of the world drift away as you wander along walkways with panoramic views of Belfast Lough or Lough Neagh, stop for a relaxing picnic by the water's edge, or sample culinary delights in the on-site restaurants.

Transport yourself back in time to experience rural Ulster life at Sentry Hill or visit Museum At The Mill which tells the story of those who worked there from the 1800's up to 1995. The White House is a 'plantation bawn' which dates back to the 16th century and features an exhibition on the Williamite and Jacobite wars. At Patterson's Spade Mill, the last working water-driven spade mill in the British Isles, a guided tour lets visitors sample the unique sights, sounds and smells of the Industrial Revolution. Or Visit the Jewel in Antrim's crown, Antrim Castle Gardens which have been transformed into a unique living museum, containing over four centuries of culture and

heritage. Continue your heritage tour at the historic Old Courthouse and Pogue's Entry Historical Cottage in Antrim town and be amazed at the history surrounding Antrim Round Tower, built around the 10th century and one of the finest of its kind in Ireland.

Antrim and Newtownabbey have a myriad of attractions, from the manicured greens of its local golf courses, to top class fishing and horse riding. And when it comes to dining and shopping, well the visitor is positively spoiled for choice. Whether you're starting out on that personal odyssey along the Causeway Coastal Route or exploring Lough Neagh, or looking to finish your journey with a flourish, why not explore what Antrim and Newtownabbey have to offer? Just be warned - you might find it hard to leave!

T: 028 9442 8331

W: www.antrimandnewtownabbey.gov.uk

Newtownabbey is set in rolling countryside located on the north-east shores of the largest fresh water lake in the British Isles, Lough Neagh. Its rich tapestry of attractions and activities is just waiting to be explored. From leisurely cruises on Lough Neagh to retail therapy at Junction One International Outlet Centre and Castle Mall, from the glorious Antrim Castle Gardens to the Theatre at the Mill at Newtownabbey, the borough can cater for everyone!

Visitors have the opportunity to take a guided tour of Antrim Castle Gardens, one of the most unique and historically intact gardens in the UK and throughout Ireland exploring four centuries of garden heritage and culture. All of the buildings including Clotworthy House, the original stables of the Castle, have been restored and set around a beautifully landscaped courtyard. In the all new visitor experience at the 400 year old Gardens, enjoy lunch at The Garden Coffee Shop, browse the Visitor Gift Shop, stroll through the Garden Exhibition Area detailing the history of the Gardens and the story of the Massereene Family and visit the light filled Oriel Gallery hosting a range of stunning exhibitions. At every turn in the Gardens, you will find features that will fascinate and intrigue you. One such feature is the 400 year old statue of the Massereene Hound that was commemorated at an earlier Game Fair by a fine painting by John R Moore. A limited edition print has been taken from this painting and No1 was presented to the Council to hang with the hound feature at Clotworthy House.

For some retail therapy you can visit Northern Ireland's largest international outlet centre, Junction One, on the edge of Antrim town. In the town itself, Castle Mall offers many familiar high street brands while the other towns and villages have a wide range of independent retailers.

Angling opportunities are good throughout the county see

www.nidirect.gov.uk/fisheries-in-county-antrim and representatives from DCAL Fisheries Division, the Sixmilewater and River Maine are in the Salmon and Woodcock Pavilion at the Game Fair. The standard of visitor accommodation in the Borough is also second to none. From four star hotels to quality guesthouses and B&Bs and camping and caravanning at the Sixmilewater and Loughshore Caravan and Camping sites.

For further information on accommodation including camping and caravan park, attractions and activities in Antrim & Newtonabbey Borough, please contact: Old Courthouse Information Centre, Market Square, Antrim, T: 028 9442 8331, E: info@antrimandnewtownabbey.gov.uk W: www.antrimandnewtownabbey.gov.uk

More attractions and a good camping & caravanning site at Carnfunnock Country Park Nr Larne

Located 4 miles north of Larne offering 191 hectares of mixed woodland, colourful gardens and way-marked walking trails with panoramic views of the Antrim Coast and the North Channel.

It's modern Visitor Centre offers reception facilities, tourist information and a gift and coffee shop. For the younger generation the Activity Centre with its outdoor maritime themed adventure playground, putting and outdoor games provides for hours of fun. A resident face painter can also be found here providing professional face painting and colourful glitter tattoos.

The Maze, sculptured in the shape of Northern Ireland, will fascinate, entertain and bewilder! For peace and tranquillity visit the beautiful Walled Garden with its unique sundials and wooden sculptures. For the more active you can try the permanent orienteering course, fitness trail or geocaching, which are ideal for beginners and professionals alike. Not to mention 'Have A Go Archery'

sessions available with the County Antrim Archery Centre.

The Family Fun Zone offers a host of activities including 18 hole mini golf, a bouncy castle, miniature railway, a bungee run, WOW balls, bungee trampolines and remote control boats and trucks, which will ensure that a visit to Carnfunnock Country Park is a fun filled adventure for all ages.

For those interested in staying longer, the 31 berth Caravan and Camping Park is perfect for a short stopover or a longer break to explore County Antrim.

For further information on opening hours, events and prices please contact Carnfunnock Visitor Centre on 028 2827 0541 or go to www.carnfunnock.co.uk or become a fan on facebook to keep up to date with the Park's regular news.

Good meals and great pubs

Shanes Castle, the venue for the fair is situated midway between Randalstown and Antrim and there are many good places to eat and drink in both towns but just up the road towards Ballymena is the famous Ramble Inn a hostelry frequented by the Game Fair team and one that they can personally recommend for great food and a convivial atmosphere. The Ramble Inn is a country pub full of atmosphere, a restaurant serving great food, and music to suit all tastes. The old coach house on the Ballymena Line has something for everyone and every occasion.

Conveniently located on the A26 just 2 miles from Antrim and Shanes Castle and 6 miles from Ballymena.

The Ramble Inn dates back to the 16th century when it was a coaching inn serving travellers on this, the main road to the coast and the Antrim Glens.

And for the Irish Game Fair a most historic site – Shanes Castle

Visitors to the Irish Game Fair on the 29th & 30th June will see a Living History Village sited in the ruins of the

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at the Irish Game Fair at Shanes Castle on the 27th & 28th June

old castle on the banks of Lough Neagh and which features a timeline from when the Vikings came up the Bann to the Georgian period and this year a 'Battle of Antrim' re-enactment of the 1798 rebellion period. I hope many will reflect and appreciate that they are visiting an estate steeped in history, legend and noble traditions.

Mary Lowry in her 'Story of Belfast' gives a most fascinating insight into the history of Shanes Castle and the O'Neill family.

In fact, 'The Red Hand of Ulster' one of the most abiding legends and the start of the O'Neill's connection with Ulster was based on a race to claim Ulster by two Vikings. As Lowry states "In an ancient expedition for the conquest of Ireland, the leader of it declared that whoever of his followers first touched the shore should possess the territory. One of them, the founder of the race which supplied Ulster with kings for

centuries, coveting the reward and seeing that another boat was likely to reach the land before him, seized an axe and with it cut off his left hand, which he flung on shore, and so was the first to touch it. Hence a red hand became the armorial ensign of the province." The red hand is also part of the O'Neill crest and the coat of arms of the county of Antrim

.Lowry goes on to state:

"..... we have as a near neighbour one of the oldest and most beautiful of them all. Shane's Castle,—or, as it was once called, "Eden-duff-carrick,"—has been, since the year 1345, the home of the O'Neills. The Royal house of O'Neill traces its history back to the very beginning of Ireland's story. They were kings of Ulster for one thousand years. Like the branches of a great oak tree that has its roots twined about the very heart of the earth itself, it would be impossible to record a tithe of the events connected with such a people as

the O'Neills.

From Donegal to Belfast, all Ulster belonged to them, and they were a terror in Ulster until Queen Elizabeth's time. A clan that could muster 24,500 fighting men was not likely to be easily subdued, and formed a power to be reckoned with." In fact Shane O'Neill visited Queen Elizabeth the 1st and almost treated with her as an equal. Interestingly there is a story that he presented her with two Irish wolfhounds and so this may explain how the Massereene Hound appeared at Antrim Castle just down the road.

I trust visitors to the Game Fair will appreciate the history and beauty of this ancient estate and we thank our hosts Lord and Lady O'Neill and estate manager the Rt Hon. Shane O'Neill for allowing us to share it with you all.



The old ruined castle on the lough – a fantastic and evocative site for a Living History Village.

The All-New Volvo XC90 at The Irish Game Fair

Shanes Castle, Antrim
27th & 28th June 2015



Bold yet understated, luxurious yet simple – the all-new XC90 is a new breed of SUV. Three engine options – the T8 Twin Engine Hybrid, T6 AWD and D5 AWD – bring you impressive power with unrivalled efficiency, meaning you'll be making an impact on everything but the environment. Plus, with intuitive in-car technologies including onboard Wi-Fi hotspot, and groundbreaking safety features, you'll be connected and protected every time you drive.

As standard on the XC90: Full Leather Interior, Full 7 Adult Seats, 9" Centre Console Touch Screen with Navigation, Active Bending Headlights LED.

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CO₂ data is preliminary. Please contact your dealer for latest information. P11D value for BIK purposes is the retail price plus delivery charge. BIK % shown for the 2015/16 tax year.

COGSWELL AND HARRISON LAUNCH NEW GUNS AT SHANES CASTLE

Sporting gun enthusiasts have a real treat in store at the Irish Game Fair at Shanes Castle on 27th and 28th June. History will be made with the Irish launch of the range of quality guns by Cogswell & Harrison.

What gun enthusiast has not drooled over photographs of guns produced by the cream of the London guntrade and wished they had the opportunity to see them first hand?



Millennium Gun.

Well, there's a real treat in store for everyone at Shanes, when Cogswell & Harrison - one of the finest and most renowned gunmakers ever - launch their latest range of shotguns and rifles in Ireland. At Shanes you will be able to see for yourself the sheer quality and value for money of this exciting new range of guns.

David Brennan, Ardee Sports Company explains how he came to be the owner: "I came across the former owner of Cogswell & Harrison, a gentleman whom I already knew, an Irishman from Galway who had left in his youth, at the Safari Show at Las Vegas in the 1980s. I later heard on the grapevine in 2008 that the company was available so I sounded him out and, to cut a long story short, I bought it and the rest is history. We own all of the records, intellectual rights to the Cogswell & Harrison name and I'm delighted to say that once again this illustrious company is producing guns.

"I have no doubt that you'll be impressed by their unique feel, balance, craftsmanship, exquisite engraving, and a 'uniqueness' only to be found in the finest shotguns. Like the purchasers down through the ages, new owners will be also be able to obtain a certificate of authenticity for their own new guns."

THE RANGE IS LAUNCHED AT SHANES

It will be a tremendous occasion and history will be made when one of the most renowned makers in English gun history unveils the very latest range. If you want to be part of this exciting occasion - make sure you visit the Ardee Sports Company stand featuring Cogswell & Harrison at Shanes Castle.



David Brennan & family, proprietors of Ardee Sports Company.



The Millennium Gun

The display will include the company's Millennium Bespoke side by side shotgun. This Best Quality 12 bore is a modern gun epitomising the finest traditional building techniques of skilled London craftsmen and is the first gun made exclusively by Cogswell & Harrison this century. Other bespoke guns are available which range in price from £13,500 upwards.



Albert Titterington with Martin Brennan & David Brennan (right).

Visitors to Shanes Castle will see how this brand new Cogswell & Harrison Best London gun oozes quality and style - just look the craftsmanship, balance and engraving traditionally expected of only the very finest London guns.

REASONABLY PRICED RANGE

Cogswell & Harrison not only produces Best guns, there are other weapons as well, aimed at those seeking high quality but at a very reasonable price. And that's where The Cogswell & Harrison Windsor range excels, being Italian made guns made to the strict specification of Cogswell & Harrison. Visitors to the stand will see what is available for 2015 in this excellent quality, value for money range.



The excellent Windsor shotguns are a range of modern field over and under shotguns available in 12g & 20g, 28" & 30" MC barrel, 3" Chambers, Steel Proof, Ejectors, Auto Safe, Single Selective Trigger.



There is a Game scene engraved action, right & left hand stock, and a RRP of £1,145.00 This gun is also available in a proper 28g model, same specifications, RRP £1,225.00



A Sporting version of the Windsor is also available in 12g, 30" MC barrel (external chokes), 3" Chambers, Steel Proof, Ejectors, Single Selective Trigger, Scroll engraved action, right & left hand stock with palm swell, RRP £1,295.00.



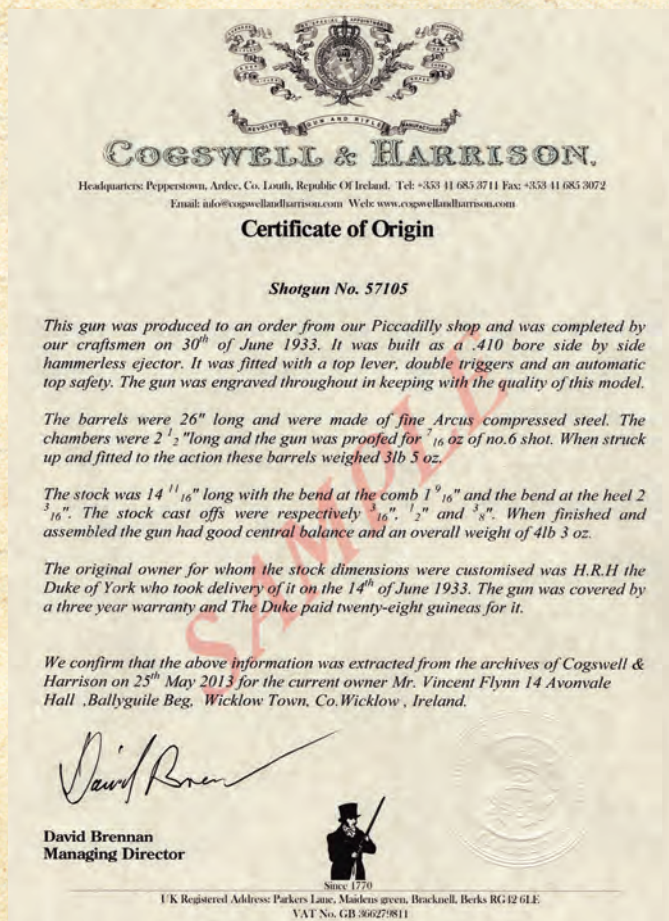
Cogswell & Harrison have also re-launched the famous Certus rifle. This bolt action rifle is currently available in .223Rem & .243Win, 20" barrel with 1/2" UNF MT, synthetic stock. It comes with weaver bases on its Remington 700 style action RRP £699.00 and other variations of the Certus are also currently in production.

As well as the family of Windsor and Certus guns, Cogswell & Harrison have other guns in production comprising bespoke side by side and premium over and under shotguns - so it will be well worth a visit to the stand to find out more.

Ardee Sports have the records of over 80,000 guns produced by Cogswell & Harrison and this is a wonderful source of information concerning guns made right from the earliest beginnings of the company. There's no doubt that owners will be queuing up to see how they can trace the history of their own guns, the date collected, stock specification, pellet count for each barrel, price etc.

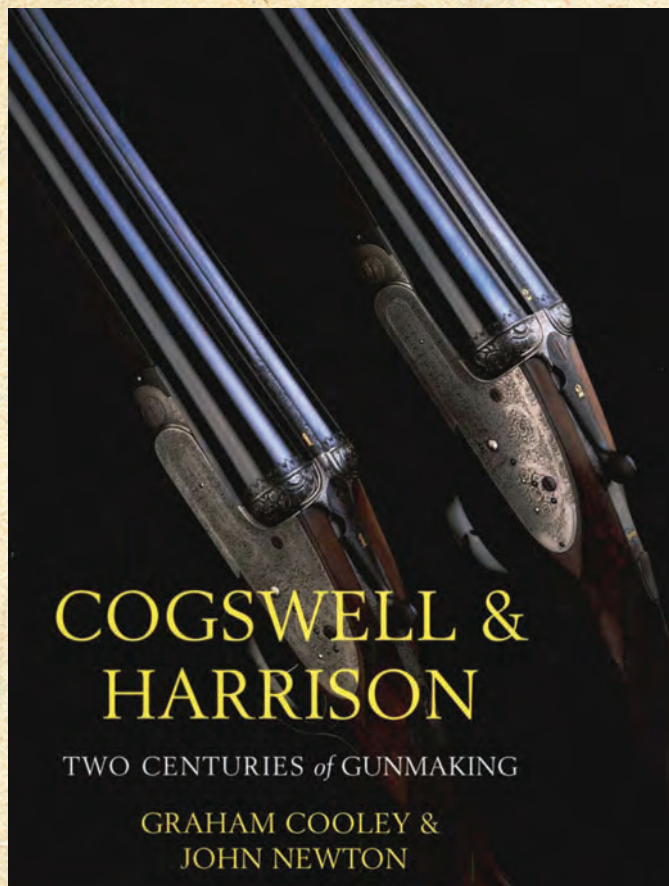


Historical records of around 80,000 Cogswell & Harrison guns going back to the 1880s to the second World War.



A 'Certificate of Origin'

Owners of all Cogswell & Harrison guns are welcome to apply for "Certificates of Origins." Over 90% of the time information is available, the applicant will be advised, and a certificate is issued for an administration fee of £50.00



We dipped into this detailed book to learn something of the history of this iconic gunmaker to find that the business was established by Benjamin Cogswell in 1770 catering for the huge demand for firearms created by the Napoleonic wars. Cogswell was an astute businessman employing only the best craftsmen. With a high reputation for his own capabilities, the skill of his employees and the standard of his products, Cogswell retained a firm hold on this market. There were few reliable gunmakers at the time and the best ones were very highly regarded.



A 'Certificate of Origin'

In 1863 Benjamin Cogswell Junior took Edward Harrison into partnership. Harrison was a firearms expert, respected in the trade and a popular personality. As a consequence, the premises became a place for well-known sportsmen to gather, seek advice from Harrison and exchange information with each other.



An Edward Harrison pin-fire 12-bore, No. 5,883, with automatic half-cocking mechanism, the subject of his patent No. 271 of 1 February 1864. (E. Rosner collection).

Edgar Harrison joined the business in 1874 and in 1879 he took out a lease on 141 New Bond Street. He had a business partnership with Chaplin who was the lessor of 226 Strand, later to be purchased by Cogswell & Harrison. In 1908, the well established gun dealer, Wm. Moore & Grey of Craven Street, London was purchased by Cogswell & Harrison. It is one of the companies that provide a direct link back to Joseph Manton (1766-1835), the illustrious founder of what we now recognise as the modern London Gun Trade. That year, Cogswell & Harrison acquired the company of Wm Moore & Grey.

An interesting gun diversification was the 'Vena' contractor gun which was essentially a 20-bore gun but with an enlarged breech end capable of shooting 12- bore cartridges. There was the 14% bore gun, the walking stick air cane, through to a novel air pistol, the 'Certus'. Another diversification was into the manufacture of cartridges.

In 1932 a new limited company was formed under the direction of Edgar Harrison, John Peskett, M.R. de Cordova and Mr Hazeldine. The old company, also Cogswell & Harrison Ltd. had been put into voluntary liquidation in 1932 to facilitate reorganisation.

In the 1950s the emphasis was on the supply of ex-government rifles and equipment to armed forces all over the world. In 1959 Sam Cummings took over Robert Churchill Ltd, the well-known gunmakers of Grange Street, London, the Hercules Arms Company and the Shooting School at Crayford. This was the start of a large combine consisting of

Interarm Co, Cogswell & Harrison Ltd (including William Moore & Grey), Robert Churchill Ltd, Wright Bros and Charles Boswell Ltd, and by the early 1970s also included Atkin Grant Lang, Beesley, Hellis, Lancaster and Watson Bros.

In March 1969, John Peskett, the Chairman of the company died at the age of 87 in the sixtieth year of his service with Cogswell & Harrison. In August 1969 Andrew Tucker resigned to form his own business. The Board was then reorganised. Ted Holden was elected Managing Director and Chairman with Dorothy Holden still a Director. Ron Cheesman was given the title of Export Contracts Director and Richard Cooper, Home Sales Director. Mr C. Street was appointed Company Secretary and Chief Accountant. The following year, in 1970, the Board celebrated its Bicentenary.

The company continued trading until it filed for voluntary liquidation in September 1982.

The company was purchased from the liquidator on 25 November 1982 to become Cogswell & Harrison (Shooting Supplies) Ltd. There followed negotiations with Farlows of Pall Mall, London, and in 1983 Farlows announced they had purchased the goodwill of Cogswell & Harrison with the intention of expanding their own increasing sales of shooting accessories. During the period of Farlows' ownership, a gunmaking licence was issued to J. Roberts & Son from 1984 to 1989. The company functioned from Farlows in Pall Mall for the next five years until it was sold to the Cooley family in 1993.



12-bore Ambassador No. 80,224. One of the models introduced to celebrate the company's bicentenary. (C. Hallatt collection).

Acknowledgements

We gratefully acknowledge the historical extracts, significant dates and historical photographs taken from **COGSWELL & HARRISON, TWO CENTURIES OF GUNMAKING** by GRAHAM COOLEY & JOHN NEWTON, published by The Sportsman's Press 2000. ISBN 0-948-253-83-5.

Copies of this book will be available on the Ardee Sports Company stand at Shanes Castle and are also available direct from the Ardee Sports Company, Pepperstown, Ardee, Co. Louth, Ireland.

Phone: +353 41 685 3711 or visit www.ardeesports.com

AND YOU CAN WIN a Cogswell & Harrison Gun at Shanes Castle on the 27th & 28th June in the Cogswell & Harrison/Countryside Alliance Ireland Clay Shoot. This shoot is being run on a handicap basis to give any shooter the chance of a lifetime to win a Cogswell & Harrison Windsor shotgun of your choice. And CAI have put up a magnificent prize of a Life Membership to CAI for the top score by a CAI member. CAI will also be linking up with Cogswell & Harrison in that the first 100 members signing up for or renewing their memberships will receive a can of Cogswell & Harrison Gun Oil.

Tradition, Creativity, Experience and Commitment Make The GREAT GAME FAIRS Ireland's Premier Countrysports and Country Living Events



Crowds enjoying the jousting at the Great Game Fairs of Ireland.

The Great Game Fairs of Ireland were conceived in 1978 and first staged by Albert Titterington, Michael Dickey, Stanley Scott (secretary BFSS) and the late Major William Brownlow (chairman BFSS) in 1979 in the traditional venue of a beautiful country estate of Clondeboy Estate, in County Down.

They believed that the proper place for a country sports event was a traditional country estate, where the competitions, displays, living history villages, tented trade villages etc are enhanced by the natural setting for their attractions.

The team's extensive experience in marketing and strategic planning, continues to promote fantastic events in venues which are not only traditional and beautiful, enhancing visitor experience, but venues that can also accommodate growth.

Some people may have attempted to copy the successful format of the fairs, right down to apparently coveting the

well established brand names and trade marks of the 'Irish Game Fair' and 'Irish Game and Country Fair.' Someone even went so far as to register 'irishgamefair' on Twitter and tried to register our other brand name/trademark 'Irish Game and Country Fair' as their trademark!

While we welcome the existence of all events which support country sports and we enjoy friendly competition, things like that (and almost attempting to 'poach' or copying attractions we have developed) are not really conducive to positive co-operation.

That aside, the Great Game Fairs of Ireland are proud to 'lead the field' developing new, distinctive attractions, increasing the number and quality of stands; main arena and subsidiary arena attractions; range of competitions of a true international standard with English, Scottish, ROI and Scottish participants and teams; competition prize structures; great family entertainment; tourism appeal; and publicity. The size of crowds we get says it all - so thank you for your support.

And this year both Shanes Castle, Antrim and Birr Castle, Co Offaly will see the planned growth of both events, which are recognised by tourism professionals and the Irish and international country sports communities, as Ireland's national game fairs and country sports events - which is why



A Battle of Antrim Re-enactment.

IRISH GAME FAIR & FINE FOOD FESTIVAL



27th & 28th JUNE 2015, SHANES CASTLE, ANTRIM

Ireland's most action packed family event with:

- | | | |
|---------------------------|------------------------|--------------------------|
| • Medieval Jousting | • Lurchers & Whippets | • Three Action Packed |
| • Living History Village | • Ferrets & Rabbits | • Arena Programmes |
| • Re-enactments | • Carriage Driving | • Huge Tented Village |
| • Viking Longship | • Dancing Horses | • with unrivalled |
| • Falconry | • Air Rifles & Archery | • shopping opportunities |
| • International Gundogs | • Fine Food Pavilion | • The NI Angling Show |
| • International Clay | • Cookery | • 'Put and Take' Fishery |
| • Shooting | • Demonstrations | • Angling Tuition for |
| • International Terriers, | • The Dog Guru | • Children |

For further details see www.irishgamefair.com

E: irishgamefair@btinternet.com Tel: 028 44839167/44615416

The Fair is sponsored by



tourism
northern ireland



Antrim and
Newtownabbey
BOROUGH COUNCIL



in 'head to head' competition with another country sports event and several other types of events they were awarded a prestigious NITB tourism award
www.irishgamefair.com/award.asp.

Director Irene Titterington said: "There are five key themes to each fair — country sports, country living, living history, fine food and real family entertainment. This year all these facets will be extended and enhanced to provide truly spectacular visitor experiences for the whole family and in fact anyone who lives, works or plays in the Irish countryside. For visitors from outside Ireland, we have top competitions, with prizes unrivalled in Ireland and equivalent to the best in the UK, special ferry and accommodation rates, the opportunity to enjoy a short break in beautiful countryside and a very friendly welcome from our host areas."

Speaking at the launch of the Fair and emphasising the importance of country pursuits, heritage and attractions to his Borough, Mayor of Antrim and Newtownabbey, Councillor Thomas Hogg, said: "The Council is delighted that the 2015 Irish Game Fair will return to Shane's Castle in June and I would encourage everyone to visit. Major events such as this make a huge contribution to raising the profile of Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough as a tourist destination throughout the island of Ireland and on the international stage."



Mayor Councillor Thomas Hogg with Director Albert Titterington and Emmett McCourt admiring the presentation copy of Emmett's book 'Feast or Famine'. Emmett as usual will be performing his culinary arts in the FLOGAS kitchen at the fair.

"Shane's Castle is the perfect setting for the Irish Game Fair with Lough Neagh, the largest freshwater lake in the British Isles, providing the perfect backdrop. The Irish Game Fair promises to be a memorable spectacle for all the family and I look forward in particular to the Northern Ireland Angling Show which will be one of the highlights on the day."

Eddie Rowan from Tourism Northern Ireland reinforces that view, saying: "I am pleased to see the event continue to mature as an appealing family festival with such a high quality programme of events on offer for all to enjoy. It is

testament to the hard work and dedication of the event managers that the Irish Game Fair is capable of attracting visitors not only at home but from further afield. On behalf of Tourism Northern Ireland I would like to wish visitors and participants an enjoyable events experience."

The Great Game Fairs of Ireland this year are planned for Shanes Castle, Antrim on the 27th & 28th June and Birr Castle, Co Offaly on the 29th & 30th August and both provide a super day's entertainment for you and your family. See the preview video at <https://vimeo.com/127139082>



More medieval thrills from the Knights of the North 'recreating the 'Knight's Tale.'

THE IRISH GAME FAIR AND FINE FOOD FESTIVAL

The first event is the Irish Game Fair and Fine Food Festival at Shanes Castle on the last weekend in June and visitors will see expansion in virtually every area of the event. There will be more trade stands, more competition with improved prize funds, a huge number of new attractions and displays and even more opportunities for family participation.

FOCUS ON ANGLING

Last year the organisers launched a 'NI Angling Show' as a show within a show and this year the angling section will have a similar format — although this year the event will have the support of all the major providers of angling in the island of Ireland, including DCAL Fisheries Division, Inland Fisheries Ireland and the Loughs Agency. As can be seen elsewhere in the magazine, the focus will be very much on introducing children and young people to angling.

Looking forward to the high profile angling focus in June, Great Game Fairs Director Albert Titterington said: "Two years ago the angling community faced the sad news that Ireland's best loved angling magazine, The Irish Angler, was ceasing publication. The Great Game Fairs of Ireland immediately stepped into the breach, creating the new Irish Game Angler magazine as a high quality insert into our already highly successful Irish Countrysports and Country



International 'Dog Guru' Keith Mathews and 'Mini Guru' Cody Mathews – two 'Dog Gurus' for the price on one!

Life magazine. Both are available in glossy magazine format as well as free to read online. The response to this from anglers right across Ireland was so immediate and so enthusiastic that we decided to enhance the angling presence at our fairs and to do this by working with DCAL Fisheries Division and Inland Fisheries Ireland to offer anglers a really special discounted voucher of £5 or €5 off the price of admission if they are a licence or permit holder. Vouchers are available from DCAL, our office or your local tackle dealer."

WAIT FOR A BARGAIN AND BETTER CHOICE IN OUR HUGE TENTED VILLAGE of TRADE STANDS

The fair at Shanes Castle last year had the largest and most varied range of trade stands and as o events elsewhere faltered, it was clearly Ireland's largest and best attended game fair ever. Trading was good last year and exhibitor bookings have flooded in, including many new stands or our tented village of trade stands, with everything one would need for stylish country living.

And as the organisers have asked all traders to have t least one special offer there will be no better place for bargains this year!

HUNTING, SHOOTING & FISHING

Hunting, shooting, gundogs and fishing are placed centre stage at the Great Game Fairs of Ireland and in 2015

it's all enhanced, including a 'country sports in action' arena with all sorts of action from long netting to ferret racing. There are great ranges of country clothing, guns, tackle and accessories to be viewed including the launch at the fair of the new range of Cogswell & Harrison shotguns plus extensive displays of modern and vintage weaponry.

DOGS

Shanes Castle has always hosted the largest and most varied canine event in Ireland including superb arena displays and personalities; real international gundog events with great prizes; a group pedigree dog show with Irish Wolfhound classes; dog agility show & demos; horse and hounds; and the 28th all Ireland Terrier, Whippet and Lurcher Championships (racing and showing). In addition to the prestige of the All Ireland Championships a huge number of heats are being staged throughout Ireland and UK for The Master McGrath Challenge to find the fastest lurcher in Ireland and the UK in the final at Shanes and for the new Five Nations Whippet Championship also to be staged at Shanes Castle. The other Five Nations Terrier and Lurcher Championship finals will be staged at Birr Castle.

There is truly international gundog action with Scottish, Welsh and English teams taking on NI and ROI teams in the Feedwell retriever and Red Mills spaniel international team events. Added to this are preliminary, novice and open tests for both retrievers and spaniels and the chance to win the Red Mills Gundog Challenge where the top spaniel meets the top retriever for top prizes.

Continuing our policy of bringing top handlers both to compete and demonstrate, we are delighted to have the Irish CLA team carry out a gundog demo in the main arena and international spaniel handler Tim Crothers making a welcome return with the Feedwell sponsored spaniel handling

demonstration. Also making his debut in the main arena is 8 year old Cody Mathews – 'the Mini Dog Guru,' who will do a gundog demonstration as an 'aperitif' to his father Keith's public dog training master classes, with Countryside Alliance supplying prizes each day for the best gentleman, lady and child handler. This is a real opportunity for the public to get the 'Dog Guru's' assistance in starting training their own pet.

CLAY SHOOTING

The clay shooting is in the capable hands of Kenny Thomas, and the Ballydugan Clay pigeon shooting Club who have put together innovative competitions with a great range of prizes including THREE guns to be won. Donal McCloy Guns Unlimited has once again



Mint your own medieval coin with Grunal Moneta – coin maker to the British Museum.



Style and tradition - Horse drawn vehicles.

provided sponsorship and we be exhibiting a fine range of shotguns at the fair and we are honoured to have the Irish launch of the new Cogswell & Harrison range of shotguns at the fair and one of these as a competition prize that can literally be won by any competent shooter.

VALUE FOR MONEY, GREAT FAMILY FUN & CHILDREN SPOILT FOR CHOICE

The Great Game Fairs of Ireland team have a reputation for really bringing Irish living history to life and Shanes Castle will see a number of Irish legends featured and a large number of spectacular static displays in the Living History Village including the return of Grunal Moneta, coin maker to the British Museum, and fantastic action packed displays including medieval jousting by the evocatively named 'Knights of the North', a return of the very popular Viking longship and a further bringing to life of the events of the 1798 rebellion with a 'Battle of Antrim' re-enactment and encampment .

The Fair provides an amazing amount of entertainment for children with a dedicated children's amusement area, the Living History Village, 'have a go' opportunities such as air rifle shooting and archery; fishing instruction and the opportunities to fish; action packed entertainment in three arenas including the opportunity to get involved; and the opportunities to see all sorts of animals from horse & hounds, all sorts of dogs, ferrets, falcons, rabbits and even snakes and spiders.



The Victorian Poacher shows off the skill of the long netter and has some fun with his nemesis – 'Fast Hands' Eddie Dash, the keeper!



Children can get on board a real Viking Long Ship.

THREE ARENA PROGRAMMES operating from 10.00 – 6.00

The Main Arena features medieval jousting, dancing horses from Cochise, muzzleloading and casting displays, gundog displays, dog agility, carriage driving, horse and hounds, marching bands, falconry, long netting & poaching displays from the Victorian Poacher and much more.

Moving to the Countrysports Arena co-ordinated by Steven McGonigal, the public have the opportunity to not only get involved with many of the main arena acts and others, but to get advice and instruction, or even 'have a go'; plus there is the excitement of ferret racing and showing organised by Darren Moore & Graham Fyffe.

Moving up into the Living History Village at the old castle there is the Living History Arena where all sorts of re-enactments take place and children have the opportunity to interact with re-enactors from various periods, to mint medieval coins and to board an authentic Viking longship.

The biggest complaint we get from families attending the fair is that it is difficult to see it all in one day – so our advice is to get there at 10.00 and treat your family to a really special day out in a marvellous country estate.

AND the fair provides great family value at £10 per adult; £5 for children over 5 and under 15 and £25 for a family (two adults and up to four children) – programme & parking FREE.

Plans are also being put in place to bring similarly spectacular displays, demonstrations, exhibits and

competitions to the Irish Game and Country Fair at Birr Castle on the 29th & 30th August

(www.irishgameandcountryfair.com) .

The Irish Game Fair and Fine Food Festival will take place from 10am – 6pm on Saturday 27th & 28th June at Shanes Castle Estate, Antrim. The event is sponsored by TourismNI and Antrim and Newtonabbey Borough Council.

**For further information see
www.irishgamefair.com**

**E: irishgamefair@btinternet.com or call
028 (from ROI 048) 44839167/44615416**

IRELAND's 28th ANNUAL ALL IRELAND TERRIER, WHIPPET and LURCHER CHAMPIONSHIPS at the IRISH GAME FAIR

The 28th Annual All Ireland Terrier & Lurcher Show and Racing Championships is being staged at the Irish Game Fair, Shanes Castle on Saturday 27th and Sunday 28th June. It is SPONSORED BY Irish Countrysports and Country Life magazine, CAI - Countryside Alliance Ireland, Feedwell, Gardiner Bros Jewellers, Barbour, Red Mills, Jaydee Coats & Whippet Supplies and John Humphries. The championships are organised by Working Dog Director Tom Barry and the Irish Working Terrier Federation.

PLEASE NOTE: Only the Master McGrath Race is pre-entry. All other events are entered on the day in order that our All Ireland Champions can be true Champions of Ireland having beaten ALL COMERS on the day.



RACING SATURDAY 27th June starts 12.00noon with the RED MILLS Master Mc Grath Final to find the fastest lurcher in the UK and Ireland

The winner receives £400, Rosette, the Master McGrath Plate to keep, a bronze Lurcher Trophy and a bag of RED MILLS and holds the Philip Lawton Memorial Trophy for one year. The runner up receives a £100 Voucher from Smyths of Coleraine a Trophy, rosette and a bag of RED MILLS dog food.

Both winner and runner up receive a presentation coat for their dog sponsored by Jaydee Coats and Whippet Supplies.

All qualifiers receive a special qualifiers limited edition cap.



Master McGrath Winner & Runner Up 2014



A tight finish to the Master McGrath Challenge in 2014.


The Feedwell All Ireland Terrier & Lurcher Racing Championships

1. Whippet Pups
2. Lurcher Pups
3. Whippet Dog
4. Whippet Bitch
5. Under 21" Elite
6. Under 23" Elite
7. Over 23 " Elite
8. Under 23" Lurcher
9. Over 23 " Lurcher
10. Traditional Lurcher (Hairy Dog/Collie Type)
11. Bull bred Lurcher
12. Greyhound Race

All Winners Championship Rosette; Trophy and Bag of Feedwell Dog Food.

Please note eligibility to run in a particular race will be decided on the day by the organisers. If there is a challenge to a dog's eligibility a panel will take a group decision on the dog's eligibility. If in doubt as to your dog's eligibility please speak to the organisers in advance of the racing.

Note racing starts 12.00 noon Master McGrath Final followed by All Ireland Championship Racing. All qualifiers for the Master McGrath Final must have their completed forms returned to Albert Titterington irishgamefair@btinternet.com before the 16th June. They must all register on the day with David Titterington at Game Fair HQ by 11.00am when they will receive their Master McGrath Qualifying Cap.

The 28th ALL IRELAND CHAMPION TERRIER, LURCHER & WHIPPET SHOW sponsored by
 **Sunday 28th start 12.00 noon with pet show and 1.00 sharp for breed classes.**

OVERALL SHOW CHAMPION wins a Barbour Coat, £50, Rosette and a presentation coat for the dog sponsored by Jaydee Coats and Whippet Supplies.

CHAMPION TERRIER, LURCHER & WHIPPET receive special bronze trophies to keep plus £50 & BAG OF NUTTS & Rosette. The Champion Lurcher receives a portrait of the dog by John Humphries.

The Champion Lurcher and Terrier qualify for the Red Mills Irish Countrysports and Country Life magazine Five Nations International Lurcher and Terrier Finals at Birr Castle on the 30th August and the Countryman's weekly Champion of Champions Contest. They also receive two tickets to the Birr Castle Fair and a year's subscription to Irish Countrysports and Country Life magazine. The Prize fund for the Red Mills Irish Countrysports and Country Life competition prestigious finals will be c €1,000.

PUPPY CHAMPION: Trophy & £25



Overall Show Champion 2014

IRISH GAME FAIR SHOW CLASSIFICATION - Show starts at 12.00noon with children's and gents/ladies handling classes

Each Class Winner Receives a Bag of Nutts Dog Food and Rosette

All Ireland Championship Terrier Show

1. Terrier Pups under 1 year
 2. Terrier under 12"
 3. Best Pair of Terriers
 4. AV Working Terrier Dog
 5. AV Working Terrier Bitch
 6. Russell Type Dog over 1 year old
 7. Russell Bitch over 1 year old
 8. Lakeland Type Dog over 1 year old
 9. Lakeland Type Bitch over 1 year old
 10. Fell or Patterdale Dog over 1 year old
 11. Fell or Patterdale Bitch over 1 year old
 12. Border Dog or Bitch over 1 year old
 13. Cross Bred Dog over 1 year old
 14. Cross Bred Bitch over 1 year old
 15. Veteran Terrier over 8 years old
- Championship 1st placed terriers in classes 2,4-15

All Ireland Lurcher Championships Show:

1. Any Variety Lurcher Pup under 1 year old
2. Smooth Dog Over 23"
3. Smooth Bitch Over 23"
4. Smooth Dog Under 23"
5. Smooth Bitch Under 23"
6. Rough Dog Over 23"
7. Rough Bitch Over 23"
8. Rough Dog Under 23"

9. Rough Bitch Under 23"
10. Lamping Dog Or Bitch
11. Coursing Dog or Bitch
12. Terrier Cross Dog or Bitch
13. Racing Bred Dog or Bitch
14. Pairs
15. Veteran Dog or Bitch Over 7

All Ireland Championship Whippet Show:

1. Whippet Puppy Dog under 1 year old
2. Whippet Puppy Bitch under 1 year old
3. Whippet Dog over 1 year old
4. Whippet Bitch over 1 year old
5. Working Whippet Bitch
6. Working Whippet Dog
7. Veteran Whippet
8. Whippet Pairs

Championship 1st from classes 3,4,5,6,7

Family Dog Show:

Any Variety shown by a child under 12 years of age

Any Variety shown by a Lady

Any Variety shown by a Gent

Champion Handling Class from the above classes

Receives a Bag of Nutts & Rosette.

The FINAL of the FEEDWELL FIVE NATIONS WHIPPET CHAMPIONSHIP

JUDGED BY A THREE JUDGE SYSTEM WILL TAKE PLACE IN THE MAIN ARENA AT 5.30pm on Sunday 28th June. WILL ALL QUALIFIERS REGISTER WITH FAIR HQ BEFORE 12.00 noon. The Winner of the Five Nations Whippet Championship will receive a variety of prizes including £400; a special bronze trophy to keep and a bag of Feedwell and a presentation coat for the dog sponsored by Jaydee Coats and Whippet Supplies

Runner Up receives a watch sponsored by Gardiner Bros, a presentation coat for the dog sponsored by Jaydee Coats and Whippet Supplies, a trophy and a bag of Feedwell.

All qualifiers receive a bag of FEEDWELL and a limited edition Five Nations Cap.

PLEASE NOTE THERE WILL BE NO CAMPING ON SITE.



2014 Five Nations Champion and Reserve Champion.

Fine Food, Country Art & Crafts and Rural Traditions

As well as promoting the importance of country sports to both the rural economy and the conservation of the countryside the fair directors have always felt it important, as part of preserving the rural way of life, to help promote the interests of rural crafts people, sporting artists and artisan food producers. As a result two of the most important pavilions at the fair are the Crafts & Tourism Pavilion and the Fine Food Pavilion. In line with both tourism and agricultural interests recognising the importance to the Irish economy of small food producers, the organisers have been growing this section of the fair into what is quite an important event in its own right and a veritable Fine Food Festival. This year demand for both Pavilions has been so great that both have been extended.

Chef to the Great Game Fairs of Ireland, Emmett McCourt, has had a great influence on, and played a central role in, the development of the Food Festival at the Fair. Like all of the Great Game Fairs team, Emmett is a keen country-sportsman, enjoying both shooting and flyfishing — and quite accomplished at both as he has twice finished runner up in the casting competitions at the fair.

Emmett is also an award winning food author with his book 'Feast or Famine' having won several prestigious awards and currently shortlisted for a World Award! Packed with traditional recipes of interest to the country sports enthusiast, but also a good historical read, this is one book that should be on every country sports enthusiast's book shelves. It is available from Emmett at the Fair or www.feastorfamine.ie.

In the FLOGAS kitchen at the both fairs, Emmett will cook venison and game dishes, rabbit dishes and all sorts of fish dishes including for kids who catch a trout in the 'put and take' fishery! But this year he is specialising in cooking the bounty and speciality of the nearby Lough Neagh — Lough Neagh eels.

As Cathy Chauhan of the Lough Neagh Eel Fishermens Co-operative says: "We have been amongst the forerunners of wild eel producers for decades and are recognised as the largest producer of wild caught eels in Europe, producing around 400 tonnes of eels annually. We are a Co-operative, protecting the livelihood of fishermen and building a sustainable, viable future for eel fishing on Lough Neagh.

"Our product, 'Lough Neagh Eel' was awarded PGI in 2011.

This award recognises the heritage, tradition & authenticity of the best quality eels available in Europe. We produce packs of fresh & frozen eels. In addition, we are also developing Lough Neagh Smoked Eel.

"We are looking forward to exhibiting at the Fair and working with Emmett on a number of new recipes."



From the Fells of Cumbria – the fantastic food from Peter Gott's Silfield Farm



Peter Gott is not only one of the longest standing fine food exhibitors at Shanes Castle, but also one of the UK's top experts on 'slow' and artisan food production. Every year Peter's stand is often the first stand fair regulars visit to put in their order for his famous wild game and wild boar pies.

On display are not only his legendary pies but also all sorts of quality meat products including Wild Boar; Sausages of all sorts; Herdwick Lamb & Mutton; Dry cured Bacon; Burgers; Boneless Roasts and Wild Game.
www.silfield.co.uk

Running down through the other exhibitors, there is much to interest and tempt the taste buds of the dedicated 'foodie' including great meat products from Forthill Farm; honey from the Randalstown Beekeepers; a couple of good craft cider makers; dried nuts and fruits; olives; craft beers; cheeses; traditional confectionery, jams and chutneys; and wines and spirits.

Old Irish Creamery

Old Irish Creamery is a family based business in Co. Limerick village called Effin which lies in the shadows of the famed Ballyhoura mountains where they manufacture range of cheddar cheese such as Oak Smoked, Garlic & Herbs, Chilli, Cranberries, Blueberries, Walnuts, Irish Porter, Irish Whiskey, Red Wine, Chocolate, Seaweed, Chives and many more.



Old Irish Creamery range has won 90 national/international awards since they began manufacture in 2008, from Gold, Silver and Bronze awards at World Cheese awards and Nantwich International Cheese Awards, Blas na hEireann and other national events. 100% Irish Cheddar and 100% natural ingredients.
www.oldirishcreamery.com

Carrick Cottage Dips

"Dips which are our dried herbs and spices, made to our own recipes; they are totally gluten free and contain no preservatives or additives. They are very versatile - they can be made into dips with mayo or natural yogurt, sour cream or creme fraiche. They can be added to oil to make marinades or salad dressing. They can also be made into rubs for meat or added directly into soups, stews, casseroles and stir fries. Finally they can be added as seasoning to any dish. They have a long shelf life and will make up to 6 pots of dip, and can be resealed and reused thus reducing waste."

The My Secret Kitchen Product Range

"Features a combination of our existing Signature Product range & recently launched Passport Product Range. Our Award Winning offering of 70+ products includes many International Fine Food medal honours from Australia & also the UK Great Taste Awards. The Global Gourmet Experience of My Secret Kitchen captures unique flavours of the world & bringing them to the dinner table for you to enjoy.

"From simple aromas & flavours to decadent dessert options or perhaps you fancy something for a special occasion - our range makes everyday gourmet. Our products help Disaster Chefs transform into Masterchefs whilst creating convenience in the kitchen.

"Our product range is only produced from the best globally sourced ingredients to ensure freshness & all natural quality. Perfect Fine Food combinations at your fingertips that can also become a home based business - just ask us how!"

Made With Love

Margaret Cooper makes a range of jams and chutneys under the Made With Love xo label. She works from home making small batches in open pots and has a 5 star hygiene rating. All ingredients used are either grown or sourced locally.

Nine chutneys and nine jams will be available over the two day event at Shanes Castle. Aubergine chutney and pineapple fig and ginger chutney are just two of the unusual flavours available. Savoury Chilli Jam and garlic chutney are forever popular.

Strawberry vodka, raspberry with white chocolate jam, berry and dark chocolate jam and a fabulous three fruit marmalade are some of the treats available.

Samples will be available and a very friendly couple will help you with any query you may have.

From Anzac Wines & Spirits

O'Hara's Irish Craft Beers that hail from County Carlow have recently added a new brew to their family and the team at Anzac Wines and Spirits are excited to introduce this at the 2015 Irish Game Fair at Shane's Castle. With its vibrant blue label, the traditional Lager, Helles style, is going down a treat. It is hopped several times to create a unique blend of textures and aromas leaving it higher in bitterness than main stream lagers and setting it apart as it delivers a unique bite with a clean balanced finish. The malty body compliments traditional European lagers and the extra-long conditioning time allows the maximum array of lager flavours to develop. The Irish Lager fits well with the O'Hara's craft range that is craved in the current market.



Voted the Number 1 Gin of the World by Short List.com earlier this year, **William's Chase Elegant Crisp Apple Gin** is one of the flagship offerings from the Chase Craft Distillery in Hertfordshire. With flavours of juniper, apple and elderflower alongside subtle citrus this is the ultimate tonic partner; and of course we have just the one in the premium **1724 Tonic!** The finished gin is distilled over 100 times with the entire process taking over two years, from orchard to bottle. You can genuinely taste the effort that goes into it. If gin is not your tippie, well of course the Chase range expands right across the exclusive spirit and liqueur sector.

Look out at this year's Game Fair in Antrim for the supremacy in Irish Cream Liqueur, **Coole Swan**. A blending of fine Single Malt Irish Whiskey with White Belgian Chocolate and Fresh Cream, Coole Swan is 100% natural and is now regarded as the world's most delicious tasting Irish Cream Liqueur. We don't just expect you to take our word for it though, come try it for yourself. In its quirky 19th century milk bottle design, Coole Swan also makes for a perfect gift.

Another Regular at the Fair is Robert Stuart from Ayrshire Confections

This is a small family run business based in Ayr on the West Coast of Scotland, specialising in bringing quality traditional confectionery to major events throughout the United Kingdom and Ireland. It is rumoured that the Fair Director, who has a sweet tooth, always pays at least one visit to this stand.



As Robert says: "We provide a full range of high quality hand made fudges and truffles and Scottish confectionary that promises to leave our customers spoilt for choice."

Crossogue Preserves

Tipperary Award Winning Artisan Preserve Company. Makers of jams, marmalades, chutneys, relishes, curds and sugar free spreads. Simplicity combined with superiority is the key to success at Crossogue Preserves, a recipient of over 50 awards throughout 20 years in business.

"Natural full flavoured preserves, using no artificial flavourings, colours or preservatives. Our range of preserves is based on Irish family recipes handed down through generations.



"Traditional cooking methods along with the highest quality ingredients make Crossogue Preserves a little luxury enjoyed by connoisseurs everywhere. We believe that truly great preserves should be made by hand using artisan cooking skills of producing small batches, just 20 at a time. We also use our own handmade Pectin which results in our unique distinctive flavour.

www.facebook.com/crossoguepreserves

<https://shop.goodfoodireland.ie/products/category/jams-preserves-curd>

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On to the other Pavilions

If you have managed not to spend all your money on fine food and drinks there are still the Craft and Tourism Pavilion and the Salmon & Woodcock Pavilion to visit. In the latter as well as being able to get instruction and advice on the fishing opportunities available you will be able to see some fantastic taxidermy by Ingrid Houwers and great sporting art from John Moore and other artists – both art and taxidermy should prove to be a worthwhile investment for the future. In the Craft and Tourism Pavilion one can see what family attractions and local holiday opportunities there are on offer plus browse a wide range of crafts from woodwork, weaving, art, ladies scarves, bags & accessories and even soap!

For the first time a local soap-maker will be exhibiting from the Belfast Soap Company:

“At the Belfast Soap Company, we make a range of 16 different soaps using only the finest natural ingredients available. Our core principles are: All ingredients are 100% natural. All packaging must be 100% recyclable. 10% of annual profits are donated to Friends of the Earth – “The Bee Cause”.



“Our natural handmade soap recipe is a special blend of Shea butter, Coconut oil, Olive oil and Castor oil. These ingredients are packed full of moisturising skin-loving properties and vitamins.

Our facial, shampoo and shaving bars all have extra special goodies added, such as Vitamin E oil, Argan oil, glycerine, cosmetic green clay and aloe vera. Our wonderful scents come from aromatherapy essential oils. Our colours are natural — we use nettles, pigments, spices, ultramarines, oxides and even cosmetic-grade charcoal to colour our soaps. We do not use any artificial colours or dyes.”

And Much, Much More

If ‘cleanliness is next to godliness’ there could be some very pleasant people walking around Shanes after a visit to this stand!

When one adds in a well stocked Canine Row; a vast array of country clothing and fashion in ‘Clothing Row’; an extensive Gunmakers Row plus all sorts of other country products including stick-making; chainsaw carving etc, etc, it is obvious that there are hours of shopping opportunities at the fair and many, many bargains.

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**Saturday 27th June
Feedwell Retriever Tests**

Feedwell

Retriever Tests organised by the UGRC/Mid Ulster Gundog Association. There are three events: An Unclassified Test; A Novice Test and an Open Test. Entry Fee £6 (does not include admission to Fair)



Prizes for each test

1st £50 Voucher for Smyths of Coleraine Plus £25 Plus Dog & Gun Trophy plus Bag of Feedwell Dog Food
2nd £25 and a bag of Feedwell Dog Food
3rd £15 and a bag of Feedwell Dog Food
Rosettes to Fourth place

SPECIAL : £25 donated by the Irish water Spaniel Club for the best young handler under 14.

SPECIAL PRIZE FOR TOP SCORING RETRIEVER SATURDAY (CAN BE WON BY UNCLASSIFIED, NOVICE OR OPEN DOG): Meal for two in the Four Trees Bar & Restaurant, 61 Main Street, Moira, BT67 0LQ
T: 028 9261 1437

For Further details - Contact Joe Johnston (Gundog Director) - Telephone 028 8673 6432 or Geoff Peoples (FT Sec UGRC) Tel: 07886371306

**The Red Mills International Spaniel
Events Saturday 27th June**

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Organised by The Antrim & Down Springer Spaniel Club and Ken Lindsay (Gundog Director) & Willie Thompson.

The Red Mills Novice Spaniel Test (Start 9.30); International with NI, ROI and English teams (c 11.00) and Open Spaniel Test (Start 2.00pm) organised by the Antrim & Down Springer Spaniel Club.



Prizes for Novice and Open Test

1st £100 Voucher sponsored by www.outdoorandcountrysports.com and Red Mills Dog Food
2nd £30 and Red Mills Dog Food
3rd £20 and Red Mills Dog Food.

SPECIAL PRIZE FOR TOP SCORING SPANIEL SATURDAY (CAN BE WON BY UNCLASSIFIED, NOVICE OR OPEN DOG): Meal for two in the Four Trees Bar & Restaurant, 61 Main Street, Moira, BT67 0LQ
T: 028 9261 1437

The top two spaniels from the Open test qualify for the: IRISH COUNTRYSPOITS & COUNTRY LIFE /RED MILLS/DUCK DRI TOP GUNDOG - GAME FAIR CHAMPION HANDLER CHALLENGE: The TWO TOP Spaniels run off on Sunday against the two top retrievers. The winner to win £250 Voucher for Smyths of Coleraine; a jump up bed from Beechview Kennel Runs; and a dog and gun trophy to keep and to the BEST OTHER BREED the winner receives a Duck Dri Coat. Other two qualifying dogs receive a £50 voucher for www.outdoorandcountrysports.com

**International Spaniel Tests
sponsored by**

**Connolly's
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Northern Ireland V Southern Ireland v England
International test - organised by Willie Thompson & Ken Lindsay at 11.00. Winners take all prize of £100 Plus Red Mills dog food

For Further Details of the Spaniel Tests contact Danny O'Neill 07713323299 Willie Thompson Tel: 028 90962441
Gundog prize money sponsored by Richard Johnston and FT Ch Shimnavale Exacalibur.

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Tim Crothers – Birdrowe
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Damian Newman – Maighmor
(www.maighmorgundogs.com)



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

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

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Gundog Events Sunday 28th June sponsored by



Commentator: Peter Smith

The Feedwell International Gundog Team Test

Ireland's only REAL International Retriever Test featuring teams from NI, Wales, ROI and Scotland

Organised by the Mid Ulster Gundog Association (Contact Joe Johnston on 028 8673 6432), Geoff Peoples Tel: 07886371306 or Robbie McGregor (028 2766 8867) starts at 09.30am

Prize Winner takes all prize of £100 & bags of Feedwell Dog Food

Feedwell International Open Test

Organised by the Mid Ulster Gundog Association starts at 1.45pm sharp entries in advance or taken on the ground. Entry £5 does not include admission to the fair.

Prizes:

1st £100 voucher for www.outdoorandcountrysports.com plus a Dog & Gun Trophy and a bag of Feedwell Dog Food

2nd £50 voucher for www.outdoorandcountrysports.com plus bag of Feedwell Dog Food

3rd £20 plus a bag of Feedwell Dog Food

4th £15 plus a bag of Feedwell Dog Food

Rosettes to 4th place

Entry Fee £6 (does not include admission to the Fair)

The top four dogs will also form the Northern Ireland team to compete in North v South v Wales event at Birr on the 30th August.

The top two Retrievers from the Open International test qualify for the: IRISH COUNTRYSPOrts & COUNTRY LIFE /REDMILLS/DUCK DRI TOP GUNDOG - GAME FAIR CHAMPION HANDLER CHALLENGE: The TWO TOP retrievers run off on Sunday against the two top spaniels. The winner to win £250 Voucher for Smyths of Coleraine; a jump up bed from Beechview Kennel Runs; and a dog and gun trophy to keep and the BEST OTHER BREED to the winner receives a Duck Dri Coat. Other two qualifying dogs receive a £50 voucher for www.outdoorandcountrysports.com

Other competitions include the NI Gundog Field & Show Society Open Group Show and the SACS (Scottish Association for Country Sports) sponsored scurry organised by Sam Willoughby and Sid Burns for gundog rehoming and rescue.

Prize money for the scurry generously sponsored by SACS is £100 for the top dog each day plus £25 for the best junior handler each day.

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30 Bird Sporting Shoot

Top two scores on Saturday in each class get free tickets for Sunday. Each Class winner on Saturday wins a watch sponsored by Gardiner Bros and a hand crafted pen by Irish Wood Pens (www.irishwoodpens.com).

Class prizes at Shanes Castle for top scores over two days:
Winners of Class A/AA and B/C shoot off for choice of Gun:

1st Class A/AA (Gun) and 1st Class B/C (Gun) shoot off for a choice of gun either Caesar Guerini Auto (sponsored Casale 2000) and Bettinsoli (sponsored by Donal McCloy Guns Unlimited). Other class prizes for each class: 2nd £100 Voucher from Smyths of Coleraine; 3rd Meal for two Five Trees Restaurant Moira; 4th £30; and 5th £20

Unclassified:

Top Overall £150 Voucher from Smyths of Coleraine; 2nd Barbour Coat; 3rd Meal for two in Five Tree Restaurant Moira; 4th £30; and 5th £20.

**Please Note: previous winners at Shanes Castle or Birr are ineligible for the unclassified section.
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Run on a handicap basis with A/AA Scratch; B/C up to + 2 birds; Unclassified up to +3 birds ; Novice – anyone who has never won a clay pigeon shoot of any type up to + 5 birds. Max score:30.

This shoot is a bonus shoot to the Game Fair Championships - one £10 card qualifies you to shoot for **ALL THREE GUNS**. The gun prize is open to all but the **CAI prize only open to CAI members**. CAI are running a special membership rate over the fair PLUS each new member receives a tin of Cogswell & Harrison Gun Oil value £5.

- **100 YARD TEAL COMPETITION** sponsored by The **REACH FAR SWIMMING SCHOOL Newtownards**
- **And for the first time in Ireland a White Gold Challenge Qualifier for the grand final on 27th September at Westfield Shooting Ground (GL54 3BX), The same weekend of The Gamebore Gold Cup so anyone going over can shoot both.**



The format is 25 birds Sportrap. Run to Sportrap rules. A/AA shoot as gold competitors one to qualify each day and win a daily prize of £125. B/C shoot as Silver competitors one qualifier each day and wins a prize of £50.

In the final in the UK there are prizes of £2,500 for Gold and Silver winners.

Fibre Wads only to be used in all competitions.

The Clay Pigeon Shooting is organised by the Ballydugan Clay Pigeon Club which runs UCPSA shoots throughout the year in the beautiful Ballydugan Estate. They also offer coaching and instruction throughout the year: For further information contact Kenny Thomas on 07763859243

The Ulster Pointer and Setter Hall of Fame

The Ulster Pointer and Setter Hall of Fame was launched in 2010 as a means to remember and honour the many giants of our sport who hail from Ulster.

Throughout the history of modern Pointer and Setter Trials many great handlers and many great dogs have been based in this province and the current generation wanted a way to celebrate the history we are so proud of.

In our inaugural year, 2010, we honoured two old friends and sparring partners who had pitted their dogs against each other for

the best part of the preceding 50 years or so. The life and contribution of David Reid and his famous Innistona pointers were the first focus of our Hall of Fame. David had sadly passed away some months before our evening of celebration and we were delighted to have his daughters Carol and Heather – herself a winner of the Irish Pointer and Setter

Championship with the great Red Setter International FTCh Innistona Gift – with us to share our tribute to David. We had another inductee that night — one who thought he was coming along to honour his friend David. John Dixon, from Monaghan, was stunned when he too was featured as the second inductee to the Hall of Fame. We had rarely seen John rendered



Bill Connolly, RED MILLS, presents (l/r) James Coyle, Des Linton, Gerald Devine and Carol Calvert with their awards marking their induction into the Hall of Fame.

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speechless, but it happened that evening.

In 2011 it was the turn of Frank McManus – a man who ranks as one of the most consistent men we'd ever had running in trials, mostly with pointers, but with one or 2 very good red setters too. Joining him on that evening was Morris Getty – another man who had done it all. There was plenty of success to talk about that evening.

In 2012, we changed the format a little and decided to celebrate the great success of the current Ulster contingent, as they had dominated the season with great consistency — making up a number of Field Trial Champions and bringing the Irish Championship back to Ulster for the first time since Donegal's Patsy Duncan won it with International FTCh Flo-Jo in the early nineties, as Carol Calvert's International FTCh Glynark Apollo clinched the title in 2012. We also introduced a recognition of the best Ulster dogs in each of the 4 Breeds. In 2012 the top Pointer in Ulster was Laurence McAlister's FTCh Ardclinis Caitlin, the top Irish Red and White Setter was Raymond Monroe's Irish FTCh Craigrua Rampant, the top Irish Red Setter was Carol Calvert's Int.FTCh Glynark Apollo and the top English Setter was Gerald Devine's ESD FTCh Ballyellen Cody – who was also named the top Setter or Pointer in the UK, being awarded the BASC's Tower Bird Trophy for that season.

2013 again saw a review of the year being produced, as thankfully there were many Ulster victories to celebrate once again, but along side this we paid tribute to one of our most popular venues. Since 1981 trials have been held in September and October at Craig's Moss, Glarryford, Co Antrim. These trials began because men

such as Bertie Law, Wilson Harrison and Mervyn Aitcheson were keen setter and pointer men as well as being members of Glarryford Gun Club. They established trials that are second to none, due to their experience as dog-men first and foremost. Over the years we have had some of the top trials here and we continue to be made welcome by the current Glarryford men. At the Hall of Fame we wanted to say thanks with a tribute to all connected with Glarryford, highlighting their success, and to celebrate the great dogs who have won there. We also made awards to the 4 top dogs again. This year it was Morris Getty's PD FTCh Gentle Jim – the winner of the UK Champion Stake who was top Ulster based Pointer. Raymond Monroe once again had the top Irish Red and White Setter, this time his IR&WSB Irish FTCh Rosie Jim. Carol Calvert's IntFTCh Glynark Apollo was once again the top Irish Red Setter and Gerald Devine had the top English Setter in Cody's sister, Bill Connolly's FTCh Ballyellen Cara, who has been Donegal based all through her career. Cara succeeded her brother as Tower Bird trophy winner for 2013 – the top Setter or Pointer in the UK.

In 2014 we returned to our original idea — inducting two new members into our Hall of Fame. James Coyle from Sion Mills had enjoyed success with his pointer dog Koram Kaiser in England as well as the North and South of Ireland, which saw Kaiser become an International FTCh in 2014 – James' first. James has been trialling since the seventies and has competed against many of the greats. There was a very warm reception for him from all gathered. The second inductee was Gerald Devine from Donegal. Gerald is primarily an English Setter man and 2014 saw his tally

of season's victories once again climb well into double figures. He is mister consistency, his particular interest is producing young dogs and 2014 saw him compete successfully with several new campaigners, as well as score in Open Stakes with the more experienced dogs.

The top four dogs were James Coyle's PD Int.FTCh Koram Kaiser – the top pointer. Desmond Linton had the top Irish Red and White Setter this time – Irish FTCh Craigrua Kansas. Gerald Devine was in contention for top English Setter with FTCh Ballyellen Cody, but Cody was just tipped at the post by his two year old daughter FTCh Gortinreagh Flyer who had enjoyed a great run of success in the Summer and Autumn and was top English Setter. Carol Calvert's Int.FTCh Glynark Apollo was top Red Setter for the third year in succession, as he had 5 Open Stake wins, in Ulster and Scotland and quite a few other placings. On analysing the Kennel Club's Stud Book records, his successes placed him as the top dog in the pointer and setter section in the UK for 2014.

From the establishment of the Ulster Pointer and Setter Hall of Fame, Connolly's Red Mills have generously sponsored us. We were very pleased to have Bill Connolly present the awards this year himself, when he was in Ulster judging for the Ulster Irish Red Setter Club. 2015 has already started with more Ulster success — the Spring circuits saw lots of dogs from the province placed in trials — the Scottish Spring circuit being a particularly happy campaigning ground, but a fuller report on this will be included in our Review of 2015.

We hope to feature the inductees in more detailed articles in future magazines — their stories are definitely worth sharing.

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Courtough Shooting Grounds

was established in 1996 by former Irish Olympian Richard Flynn and his son William also an International grade shooter and Irish team member.

Since its formation in 1996 Courtough has expanded to become Ireland's premier, shooting ground, offering disciplines such as Down the line, Olympic Trap, Automatic Ball Trap, Skeet, Sporting, Fitasc and Compak shooting. All shooting are fully covered in away from the elements of the weather, which makes us an ideal venue all year round.

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The most popular Game Cover crop sold to gun clubs in Ireland. This contains: Triticale, Linseed, Gold of Pleasure, Mustard, Phacelia and a small amount of Crimson Clover, Cornflower and Red Poppy. This is a one year crop producing 1 tonnes of seed per acre.

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John Howard, Sunnyside Farm, Rathcormac, Co. Cork. Phone: 025 36253
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Drumbanagher Estate Shoot

Tom Stalker visits Drumbanagher Estate Shoot in Co. Armagh and finds a hidden gem sparkling amongst the hills of Poyntzpass.

Drumbanagher is a walled demesne situated a few miles south of the scenic village of Poyntzpass in the county of Armagh, Northern Ireland. The historic seat of the Close family, the demesne extends to some 650 acres and is one of the most fertile and beautiful private areas in the Emerald Isle. Sadly, Drumbanagher Castle, the once handsome primary residence of the demesne, built in 1837 by Lieut.-Col. Maxwell Close is now demolished.

However, the large portico, which stood in front of the Italian-style house remains to the present day and gives a sense of the impressive grandeur of the demesne.

The topography of Drumbanagher makes it one of the prettiest expanses of Irish countryside where steep wooded valleys and tree-lined pastures idyllically lend themselves to superlative driven game shooting. Drumbanagher Estate Shoot is rightly

regarded as one of Northern Ireland's premier high bird shoots and the shooting offered there has become much sought after by high bird aficionados throughout the island of Ireland and further afield.

The shoot operates today with a military efficiency under the direction of Brian Byrne who fulfils the combined role of Gamekeeper and Shoot Manager and has done since 2000. The twelve named drives at



Quality birds - Gun's eye view at Drumbanagher.



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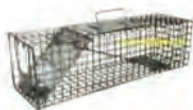
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Excitement mounts as the shooting is about to begin.

Drumbanagher produce stratospheric birds with repetitive ease. However, the true sporting potential of the estate only became a reality in relatively recent times and for years this gem of Irish game shooting lay undiscovered and undeveloped. Brian takes up the tale of the shoot's development:

"I had kept on a number of other estates in Ireland over the course of around 25 years. Each of the estates made wonderful driven shoots in their own right but were limited to varying degrees by their topography and in some cases by the history of their development before my time with each of them. When I first saw Drumbanagher it was clear that the estate presented an expanse of land with a practically ideal topography for driven shooting, but the ground itself had seen no development whatsoever. In some ways that meant that taking the estate in hand as a shoot was an immense opportunity; I had a blank canvas with which to work. Although, with everything to do from scratch, coming to Drumbanagher presented some serious challenges as well.

However, I have been encouraged in my efforts at the estate by the Close family and by the local community. I am also surrounded by a fantastic team whose dedicated support has been invaluable in developing the shoot to the level at which it stands today."

As with many shoots, Drumbanagher is reliant upon a release programme each year. However, the shoot makes every effort to increase the wild stock of birds each year with feeding extended throughout the closed season and with the vigorous control of pest species year round. Habitat enhancement is also high among the priorities at Drumbanagher with large tracts of mixed game cover being planted in addition to an extensive programme of woodland management as well as tree and hedge planting in an effort to encourage wild stocks.

The shoot prides itself on a desire for quality which far outweighs any wish to unnecessarily increase quantity. In line with this the shoot aims to produce bags of between 150 and 250 birds per day but can also accommodate larger days or back-to-

back days if necessary.

The shooting is run on a very social basis and this is something that Brian has strived to maintain. "The social aspect of our sport is important. Whilst transport can be provided between drives, due to the compact nature of the estate, the drives at Drumbanagher are within walking distance of each other. Most of the Guns generally elect to do just that and this provides an opportunity for everyone to fully engage with fellow Guns, whether old friends or new acquaintances."

Facilities

The hub of the shoot is the enclosed stone-built courtyard which provides car parking for visiting Guns, kennelling for Brian's Drumnascamp line of cockers and which centralises on a comfortably converted stone building which acts as the shooting lodge. The lodge provides both shelter and warmth, provided by a generously proportioned wood-burning stove, and is a welcome retreat during the winter months.

Tea, coffee and a warm welcome are provided to all upon arrival at the lodge and light refreshments are served in the field after the second drive of the day. Visiting Guns have the option of stopping around midday and retiring back to the lodge for lunch, although the majority prefer to "shoot through", dining after the final drive of the day, when drinks, a hot meal provided by an excellent local restaurant, followed by dessert with tea and coffee are served. The Irish coffee also served at Drumbanagher has become one of the shoot's specialities over the years and is well worth the attentions of those who prefer something a little stronger at the end of the day.

Shooting Impressions

Typically shooting begins at around 09:30 following the usual safety briefing and drawing of peg numbers. Although Game Cards are issued, Guns are closely chaperoned to ensure that everyone finds their way between

drives and to the right peg. The visiting Gun can therefore relax and soak up the atmosphere of the day without the need to concern themselves about where to be and when. Those new to the shoot are briefed at the peg on what to expect from any particular drive.

I visited Drumbanagher on a day in mid-December with the shooting season at its zenith. The weather was unusually fine and dry which in most opinions might not have proved particularly conducive to presenting high birds. However, the standard of birds that were to be shown during the course of day was what can only be described as exceptional.

The team of Guns on the day in question were well acquainted with the drives at Drumbanagher having been there on numerous occasions in the past. Spirits were high as the Guns made their way the short distance from the courtyard to the pegs for the first drive of the day at Bell's Hill. On this drive Guns are positioned on pegs in an open area of former parkland known as the Lawn Field. The horn signalling the start of the drive was sounded as soon as the Guns were on their pegs and comfortable. Before the Guns is a long, elevated wood bounded by an extensive cover crop on its upper right hand edge. The wood extends for some distance to the rear of the flushing point, which is some little way back in the wood at its highest point above the Guns. With some distance to be travelled by the beaters in blanking-in the drive, some while passed before the birds began to appear, first in ones and

twos, then in larger but controlled flushes. The birds flew extremely well gaining height and speed and provided shooting throughout the line. The large number of shots fired was testimony to the number of birds presented and the cartridge to kill ratio (which won't be recounted here for reasons of etiquette) certainly gave an indication of the high quality of the birds.

With the horn blown again to signal the end of the drive, picking up completed by an efficient team of dog handlers, and after regrouping, congratulations and commiserations were shared throughout the team of Guns, before a further short walk to the area known as Claypark. Upon arrival the Guns were swiftly directed onto their pegs for the second drive. Claypark is perhaps the highest point on the estate and is a large and steeply inclined area of pastureland bounded on all sides by narrow woodland. The beaters unobtrusively blank-in the surrounding woodland to the high ground above the Guns before skilfully driving manageable flushes over the treetops some distance ahead of the Guns. From there the birds fly over the pegs and on to an unseen home wood some way in the distance behind the Guns. The quality of the birds on this drive was quite simply startling. Hen birds in particular appeared as small as starlings such was their height and despite numerous volleys of shots from the double-banked Guns many birds seemed untouchable. Added to this that, due to having covered a significant distance before reaching the

Guns, most birds were already on set wings and sliding through the air at phenomenal rate, they really were an incredibly difficult and deceptive target. Those Guns with the ability to pluck these archangels from the air with any degree of regularity clearly possess a particular set of well-honed skills. The flushes of pheasant on this drive were also interspersed by a number of mallard adding variety and at a height equal to that of any of the pheasants shown. Spectacular.

With the drive over, elevenses were served in the field in the form of a warming soup and crackers. This gave the Guns as well as the numerous beaters, pickers-up, flankers, etc. a short interval in which to socialise, revive and discuss the morning's sport before moving off to the next drive, Carrickbrack.

Carrickbrack is an incredibly steep area of spinney on one side of a narrow valley. The spinney terminates at the foot of some mature woodland perched high above a laneway. Guns are located along a section of the laneway which cuts horizontally across the face of the spinney. Again some Guns are double-banked with a number at the foot of an even steeper slope below the lane. The drive involves blanking-in the wood above before the unseen line of beaters sweeps across the face the spinney some way above the Guns. The variety of birds presented by this drive is amazing. Initially birds emerge from the highest point in the drive producing spectacular driven birds crossing the valley below, heading for a wood on



The banter starts after an amazing drive.

the other side. Upon reaching the Guns and particularly those in the back line they have reached an astonishing height indeed. Owing to the topography, the birds are only visible and indeed manageable when practically overhead. Guns therefore need to be at the top of their game if they are to have any measure of success on the Carrickbrack drive. When the beaters change direction upon reaching the spinney itself, many of the birds sweep along the line of Guns producing tantalising shots at birds that have generally already been missed by ones neighbouring Gun. The habitat on this particular drive is also ideal for woodcock and a number of this most prized of gamebirds put in an appearance on the day in question sending ripples of excitement along the line to the cries of “woodcock forward” from the beaters.

After the excitement of Carrickbrack comes Kennel Wood. The walk to this drive provides a ‘good stretch of the legs’ being located near the main gates of the estate and some little distance from Carrickbrack. The wood itself is an elevated, pear-shaped mixture of hardwoods with a dense patch of laurels at the flushing end. Guns are stood at a U-shaped pattern of pegs located on a steep incline in front of the wood with two to three more located on pegs some way behind the main line in an area of clear-fell adjacent to the avenue into the estate. A relatively short drive of the wood concentrated birds into the laurels with controlled flushing producing bouquets of quite excellent birds once again. The Guns to the rear of the main line were treated to some superb birds indeed.

Four drives down, two to go

From Kennel Wood it was on to the drive known as Demoan. This drive focuses on a large area of cover crop situated on top of a long incline of tree-lined pastureland and backed by woodland. The T-shaped cover crop requires skilful blanking-in to gently encourage the birds from the woodland

and the area of crop running along its exterior, out into the wide finger of crop that projects on to the high ground above the Guns. However, this task is one which has clearly been completed many times by the beating team and the drive progressed in textbook fashion. Shooting was spread evenly long the line of Guns throughout the drive with plentiful birds for everyone. Those Guns directly opposite the projecting finger of cover crop were clearly in the ‘pound seat’ in the latter stages of the drive on this particular day and due to the open vista their shooting skills were on public show for all to see – no pressure. All of the Guns however acquitted themselves well having well and truly found their form by this stage in the day and a good number of these deceptively high birds were added to the bag.

The final drive of the day was the drive known as The Bulge. This is perhaps Drumbanagher’s flagship drive. The drive is located adjacent to the Demoan drive and consists of two arms of woodland joined to a central ‘bulge’ of mixed woodland at the top of short but steep incline of pastureland. Both arms of woodland are blanked into the main central area requiring a significant investment of time before the birds are brought forward to a flushing point within the wood but some way back and above the Guns. In order to do the numbers of birds on this drive justice, Guns are again double-banked with approximately half their number lined along the boundary of the pastureland and the other half located on pegs situated on mowed stands within a clear-fell area some way behind. The shooting produced by this drive was quite simply extraordinary. With the blanking-in completed trickles of birds emerged with consistent regularity and at ever increasing height; powerful birds bent on crossing the lines of Guns to a wooded incline some way in the distance. Shooting was noticeably well spread amongst the Guns during the course of this protracted drive but the back line was

presented with some particularly fine birds. The drive in full swing was an amazing spectacle and no visiting Gun could be disappointed.

With the final horn of the day blown, the echo of gunshots gave way to the soft peeps of dog whistles from the pickers-up who were already engaged in the task of collecting the numerous fallen.

Smiles all round both from the Guns and Brian and his team alike.

This was quite the most superb day of driven sport the author has witnessed in some while. Judging by the demeanour of the Guns at the end of the day it was clear that it was for them too. It was a happy group indeed that retired to the shooting lodge for a sumptuous late-lunch, which seemed expertly timed with the arrival of everyone back at the courtyard.

What of the future?

But what of the aspirations for the shoot with a reputation for fine shooting which must surely be firmly acknowledged by this stage?

“You can never be complacent about a shoot,” says Brian, “and no matter how good it is, there will always be something that can be improved or tweaked. The main thing for us is to continue building on what we have, to continue investing the shoot’s development and strive for the best.”

Ireland has not always featured as greatly as it should when it comes to high quality shoots, even when they have been married so perfectly with tradition and expertise. However, Drumbanagher Estate must be the perfect example of just such a shoot and one which will surpass the expectations of even the most seasoned Gun.

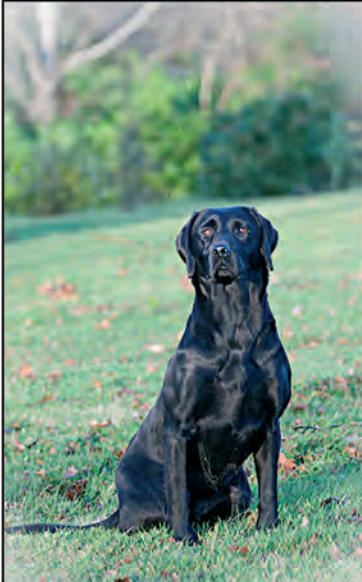
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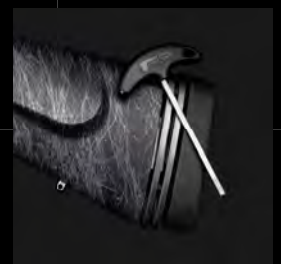


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Scottish Diary



You cannot help but feel the politicians do not give two hoots as long as money comes in!

2015 is moving at quite a pace. I have been continuing to progress my clay shooting with Iain MacGregor. During the colder months it can be challenging going out to shoot clays and stay warm, but thankfully we have not had any severe winter weather in lowland Scotland. Spring has been very sunny and we have had a few 'no coat' days.

Everything seems to be thriving; this was certainly the case when I met Deer Stalker David Quarrell in Glasgow one Saturday morning to photograph some very unusual wildlife, urban roe deer. Less than a mile into our journey in David's car we saw the first group of deer. There were eight roe deer feeding in a field right next to the Fort shopping centre on the north-east side of Glasgow. A few more miles up the road we drove to some scrubby open land just outside the village of Gartcosh with the ruins of the Gartloch hospital.

The former mental asylum provides a rather imposing backdrop as we parked up and walked no more than 50 yards and spotted another large group

of deer. Looking over the open land backing onto a housing estate and we saw another six deer. I was surprised to see the deer living so close to people, industry and road networks. Without question they were relaxed and unperturbed by the activity around them and they were healthy. David said: "The deer have a good food supply, the temperature in the built up areas is a few degrees warmer so their body condition is not stressed trying to survive the cold winter months. If deer are healthy and well fed the does go on to produce two and sometimes three young."

David has been a deer stalker for more than 35 years and is a member of the South Lanarkshire Deer Group (SLDG). The group was formed in 2010 and has a small membership of 22 stalkers who manage the local deer population, legally and in season. He said: "Urban deer are very adaptable and highly observant. I have seen them move to a covered area so they can observe the dog walkers from a distance. Once the walkers have gone,

the deer are back out and browsing again." It had been an interesting trip, I never imagined I would be seeing so many healthy deer so close to a major city. In the open countryside you would struggle to see such large numbers even in a county like Fife. It is a good example of how nature can adapt and thrive in the most unexpected of places.

At the end of the February I was



Clay coach Iain MacGregor in thoughtful mood.



Stalker David Quarrell took me to see the urban deer.

back in Glasgow again for the Lowland Deer Network Scotland AGM where I was one of the three guest speakers. It was a well attended event with venison sausage tasting and coffee on arrival before the official proceedings commenced with Chairman Richard Cooke.

Vibrant springtime colour

I travelled to South West Wales last month on a photography commission in Carmarthenshire. It is a beautiful county with gentle rolling landscapes and big sky views, there are very places in the UK where you can enjoy huge panoramic views. The countryside was vibrant with springtime colour and the fields were full of lambs. I was staying

at Glascoed farm holiday cottages where I enjoyed the comfort of a four poster bed, dined on tasty Glascoed lamb and relaxed with a night-time dip in the hot tub beneath the twinkling stars in an dark endless sky. I also had the pleasure of meeting the Glascoed Egg Hound. Each morning, Bonnie the Springer spaniel collects the farm's free-range chicken eggs in her mouth and never breaks the shell, amazing!

You can find the site at www.westwalescottages.co.uk

Jerry the gundog has been testing out new beds. Dru Ross from the Big Dog Bed Company contacted me through Twitter to see if we would be interested in testing out the beds. Their 'active recovery' beds are great for working

dogs and those with joint problems. The covers are anti-bacterial, waterproof and UV resistant. Nine year old Jerry is a semi-retired and now enjoying life at a more sedate pace so a comfy bed is very important at home and for travelling in the car. He spent his first night on his new bed and was still fast asleep, snoring in the morning. I think it is fair to say he approves of his new bed! You can find the site at www.bigdogbedcompany.co.uk

I have been working closely with a new website, Excellas Sport & Leisure, aimed at the country sports market. Their focus is on shooting, archery and fishing, a one-stop-shop offering the visitor lots of information on the sports and local accommodation with no annoying agency portals. The UK site was created after the owner, Andy Statham, and his family wanted to have a weekend away to go clay shooting and stay in a dog friendly hotel. Andy said: "All I wanted to do was take my family and dog away for a weekend country break but trying to find information about clay shooting grounds, local restaurants and dog friendly hotels was unnecessarily frustrating and involved looking at lots of websites. We have created a site full of information, where you can search and bookmark everything in one place." You can find the site at www.excellas.co.uk

The salmon fishing is going well, all



Deer feeding on the north-east side of Glasgow.



Deer could also be seen quite close to housing.



Bonnie collects the farm's free range eggs in her mouth.



Nine year old Jerry is now a retired gundog.

the ghillies I have spoken to are positive and reporting plenty fish activity on the rivers. On the Tay there is now a statutory 'no kill' rule. The new legislation means that all salmon caught prior to April must be released back into the water unharmed. This rule will help

protect early running salmon and has been welcomed by anglers who have supported voluntary catch and release for a number of seasons on the Tay. However, is it enough? I spoke to actor and TV presenter Paul Young about the new measures. Paul said: "It is good that anglers have agreed to a no kill policy for spring salmon in the rivers of Scotland, but has anyone spoken to the nets, the seals, dolphins and porpoises round Scotland's coastline to agree to the same? I doubt it."

I have to agree with Paul, there are other threats to the salmon and they need to be addressed. Ghillies, beat owners and anglers are all doing their part to help the salmon but the pest control is so restricted it makes little difference to the predator numbers. You can not help but feel the politicians do not give two hoots about it as long as money comes in from general fishing to boost their figures and the economy. I think that's a subject I will definitely explore at a later date



Catch and release is now the rule on the Tay for pre-April fish.



TV presenter Paul Young applauds the 'no kill' policy but has other concerns as well.

Harry the Houdini

At the screeching of brakes I glanced through the kitchen window just in time to see a van swerve into the farm yard.

Its driver leapt out, to sprint away from the vehicle as though it contained a ticking time bomb! Intrigued, I dashed outside to see what was going on. The van's flustered driver was well known to me, and a Falstaffian countryman of the old school. Red faced and muttering he was by now walking towards me, his large walrus moustache bristling with agitation.

Unable to maintain his composure a moment longer, he blurted out that he had just come within a hair's breadth of death, only narrowly escaping a fearful mauling, by the beast which was contained within his vehicle. I was agog, as never before had I heard such a tale of nightmarish horror! What could this animal possibly be, that had so nearly caused my moustachioed friend to meet his maker?

Approaching the little van I was advised to exercise the greatest caution, for once the vehicle's door was open, one careless movement on my part, could cost me my life. Or at the very least.... a limb!

Peering through the passenger side window, I fully expected to be confronted by a razor backed wild boar, ravening wolf, or similar blood thirsty beast; but instead, saw nothing. The front of the van was quite empty! Then, as I continued to look around the metro's interior, a movement caught my eye, as slowly, steadily, from beneath the driver's seat, there appeared a twitching pink nose, accompanied by a fine set of sandy coloured whiskers.

As I stood open mouthed, the largest ferret I had ever seen emerged from under the tattered vinyl seat, blinking in the daylight, and yawning widely. Doubtless the animal had been roused from its slumbers by the howling of tyres, and frantic slamming of the vehicle's door!



The largest ferret I had ever seen emerged.

It showed a fine set of ivory white fangs

I had seen large ferrets before, and even possessed a few splendid specimens myself, but this colossus of the mustelid world was in a class of its own. It was huge - approaching the size of a small otter! Sleek, male, and with a luxuriant sand coloured coat, the huge hob reared up against the passenger door, sniffing the glass and showing a fine set of ivory white fangs. Astonished, I turned to my friend and asked how he had come by such an animal.

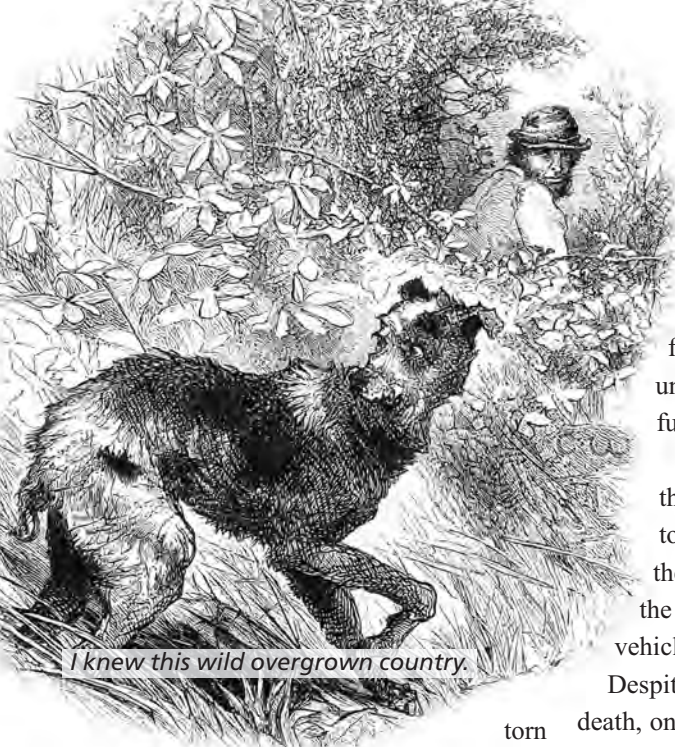
He explained that he had been on his way home from a successful morning's pigeon shooting, when he had decided to take a short cut. His time saving route took him along a little used lane, which ran by an area of common land. It was here that he had spotted the enormous ferret, running along the edge of the road.

I knew the place well, for it was wild, fen-like country, mostly overgrown with reed beds, and sometimes used by Romanies for grazing their vanner ponies. In fact,

only the week before I had seen a traditional bow topped wagon parked there, complete with a pair of rough haired lurchers, and a piebald cob grazing nearby. Could this explain the ferret's presence? Had it perhaps escaped from its Romany owners, only to be left behind when they moved on?

My friend, composure slowly returning, explained how on seeing the enormous ferret, he had pulled up at the side of the road, taken an old hessian potato sack from the back of the van, and then screwing up every ounce of courage, captured the beast! This done, he tied up the neck of the sack with string from his pocket, placing the wriggling animal on top of a pile of pigeon decoys, in the back of the metro. Knowing that I would appreciate a good working ferret, he then headed across to the farm, with all the speed his little van could muster.

The plan though well laid, had one fault. The hessian sack was old, and simply not strong enough to contain its prisoner for long. Within two minutes flat, the sharp clawed escapologist had



I knew this wild overgrown country.

torn its way out, and being short of company decided to join the driver up front.

The first my friend knew of the creature's escape, was when it climbed up the back of the drivers seat, and proceeded to scrambled over his shoulder and down into his lap! All of this took place at around 60 mph. I shall not commit to paper my friends exact comments, for fear that people of a delicate disposition might read this tale but, needless to say, the animal gave him quite a fright! From the driver's lap the huge ferret scrambled up onto the steering wheel, and thence to the van's dashboard, where it proceeded to run up and down excitedly. Clearly it hadn't had such fun in ages.

Like a furry python

Traffic police look away now, for in an attempt to clear the cavorting mustelid from his view through the windscreen, my friend took a shaky hand from the steering wheel, and attempted to push the ferret out of the way. Clearly mistaking this as an invitation to play, the huge ferret simply ran up my friend's trembling arm, and wrapped itself about his neck in the manner of a musky fur stole. The van veered wildly, as my terrified friend tried to free himself from his living neckwear. It is only a blessing that those quiet country lanes were devoid of other traffic! At this point the ferret

must have become tired from all its vehicular gymnastics, and decided that it was time for a little nap. Yawning, it slithered down my hysterical friend's right leg, and curled up under the driver's seat like a furry python.

Minutes later, the driver of the little van, nerves now close to breaking point, swerved into the farm yard, and bailed out of the driver's door before the vehicle had even come to a halt.

Despite this detailed account of near death, one of us had to do something; so taking a step forward, I gingerly opened the van's door. The ferret simply sat on the passenger seat and looked at me with dark, blinking, bead like eyes. Clenching a fist I slowly offered it a knuckle, for if it was to bite, it would get little. The animal sniffed my knuckle, and then proceeded to lick it; so with a deep breath, I leant forward, put my right hand under the ferret's chest, and scooped it up into my arms. There, this terror, this scourge of the mini van, this blood thirsty beast, curled up like a kitten and went to sleep! This was my introduction to the finest ferret I have so far owned.

Bristling with indignation.



Harry, for he was named after Houdini the great escapologist, was as gentle as a lamb, and had clearly been handled to perfection. He would follow me around like a dog, and seemed to genuinely enjoy both people's company and affection. If when out ferreting a rabbit refused to bolt, he would simply grab hold of it, and drag it to the surface for me to dispatch. He was a treasure beyond rubies.

Like his namesake, however, he had a talent for escaping, and on more than one occasion, I bumped into the bewhiskered gentleman happily exploring the orchard, or on a freelance mouse hunting expedition in the byre. When happy, which was most of the time, he would emit a chuntering sound, as though he were chuckling under his breath, and he liked nothing more than a race around the sitting room, followed by a game of hide and seek under the sofa cushions.

An animal of mystery, he is now gone to that great ferret run in the sky. But to the Romany who bred him and handled him so well, I would like to say a heart felt thank you, for you allowed me to know one of the most amazing creatures it has ever been my good fortune to encounter!

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Barony Basset Hounds

Daphne Thorne and hounds drawing a bank overlooking the Solway.

The sight of the little hounds tumbling over walls, squeezing under fences and thrusting through cover was one to delight the eye.

It was back in 2002 that the Scottish Parliament brought forward legislation to ban hunting with hounds in Scotland. At the time of the ban there were ten packs of foxhounds in Scotland and the success of Mike Watson's bill can be measured by the fact that now, thirteen years on, there are still ten packs of foxhounds in Scotland. True, the Dumfriesshire pack was disbanded soon after the law was passed but a new foxhound pack, the Dumfriesshire and Stewartry, was formed in 2005 restoring the status quo. Hunting has changed to a degree, since the law requires that hounds are used to flush foxes to Guns who will attempt to shoot them before hounds catch them, but hunting continues with probably more foxes being killed than was the case prior to the ban, shooting being a more efficient, though arguably less humane method of control. This is possibly not the result they envisaged when our MSPs voted to 'ban' hunting.

But the story of hunting in Scotland doesn't stop with ten packs of foxhounds. Daphne Thorne was secretary of the committee that formed the new Dumfriesshire and Stewartry pack and went on, in 2006, to form her own pack of basset hounds because, in her own words, she was so incensed by



Master and Huntsman Daphne Thorne negotiates a steep bank.



Hounds working.

the ban that she was determined that Scotland would have at least one new pack of hounds to add to those already hunting. Please welcome the Barony Bassets.

There was a famous local pack in the area during the twentieth century: Sir Rupert Cunningham-Jardine's Castlemilk Bassets and many of the lines of Daphne's pack go back to them. She started the pack with an original draft of four steady, reliable hounds from David Vaughan of Bridgnorth in Shropshire and has now expanded the pack to eleven couple. They are a mixture of English working bassets and French Petit Basset Griffon Vendeens (PBGVs), some smooth-coated and some rough-coated though Daphne hopes, eventually, to have a pack comprised of all rough-coated hounds.

Active or sedentary - the choice is yours

When the pack was first formed they began hunting on Sunday afternoons as Daphne and her husband Robert were fully occupied during the rest of the week with running their animal feeds business. Retirement opened up a wider range of possible hunting dates but their core of enthusiastic supporters were keen to retain their Sunday afternoon sport and so it has stayed. What better way to burn off the excesses of a Saturday night, or work up an appetite for a late Sunday dinner? Following

these hounds can be a pretty active sport, or, if you can find a suitable high point to occupy and have a decent set of

binoculars, it can be rather more sedentary. The choice is yours.

Daphne Thorne is the Master of the Barony Bassets and is aided by two whippers-in, her husband Robert and Callum Rae. Typically, there will be around ten and a half couple of hounds out with the traditional 'half couple' often being made up of Peanut: a diminutive terrier who matches her bigger cousins for pace, stamina and heart and tackles everything from thorns to nettles and gorse to brambles with total disregard for her own comfort or safety. Plastered in mud and soaking wet she keeps right up with the pack and is generally right to the fore when a rabbit is bolted.

The Barony Bassets hunt rabbits. With just the kind of logical thinking



Whipper-in Robert Thorne.



John Steele working with terriers and ferrets.

we have come to expect from our elected representatives the Members of the Scottish Parliament came to the conclusion that to chase a hare or a fox with hounds was an act of such wanton cruelty that the perpetrators should be arrested, tried, fined and possibly imprisoned, but that to chase a rabbit was perfectly acceptable. So, in Scotland it is still legal to hunt rabbits with hounds and that is what the Barony Bassets do. And they do it exceedingly well.

A feral, primitive sound, the hairs on the back of my neck stood up

I was out with them one afternoon as

they drew along the stone dykes and gorse covered thickets along the banks of the Solway Firth. It was a glorious, cold, sunny winter afternoon and the sight of the little hounds tumbling over walls, squeezing under fences and thrusting through cover was one to delight the eye. Even better, when they hit scent, was the sound of their voices. The sound of a pack of hounds in full cry is often described as ‘music’ and to someone who has little experience of hunting the cry of the pack came as a revelation. A feral, primitive sound, it made the hairs on the back of my neck stand up. What effect it has on any rabbit unfortunate enough to be in line of fire I can only imagine.

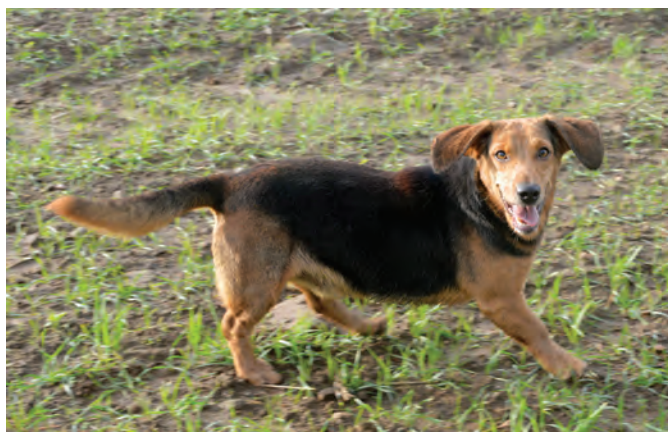


Calling them up from the Solway shore.

Prior to the hunting bans in the UK bassets were used to hunt hares rather than rabbits and I asked whipper-in Callum Rae whether the change from hare to rabbit was easy for them. He smiled indulgently at my innocence. ‘They’ll hunt anything,’ he said. ‘Rabbit, hare, fox, deer, bear, wolf...’ I gathered that getting them to hunt rabbits was not a problem. But what happens when they hit a hare line or flush a deer or fox? That is where Callum and his fellow whipper-in Robert Thorne come into play.

While Daphne hunts the hounds, staying close by the pack, Robert and Callum are generally out on the flanks ready to step in and turn hounds if they pick up the line of some banned quarry. One afternoon, when there were more hares than rabbits crouched in among the rushes and white grass I saw just how well the pack could be controlled. Three times they got onto the line of a hare and each time they were stopped and turned off within less than a hundred yards. As Daphne explained, the pack was formed to hunt rabbits and that is exactly what they do. The landowners who invite the pack onto their farms are pleased to see the rabbit population reduced but would not, in most cases, want to see any hares killed even if it was still lawful to do so. The hare population is much reduced from the days when anyone who could lay their hands on a gun was welcome to take part in the big hare drives at the end of the shooting season, and these days the sight of a pair of hares racing and boxing across the spring fields is one to enjoy where fifty years ago the sight of perhaps forty hares in one field was less welcome to the farmer.

Always there on hunting afternoons is John Steele with his ferrets – ostensibly to push rabbits out from their buries for the pack to hunt, though I detected a certain rivalry between hounds and ferrets for who could add the most bunnies to the bag. The fact that most of the holes were netted was a clue. That said, between hounds and ferrets there is pretty much always



Every dog was eager for work.

something going on through the short winter afternoons and the more rabbits accounted for the better pleased the farmers.

Hunting is something very much in Robert and Daphne's blood. Robert was in hunt service for twenty-five years and now runs a pack of mink-hounds in the summer months. Their enthusiasm for the sport is evident as is their

delight in watching their hounds working as hounds are intended to do. For someone used to working with gundogs where generally one dog at a time is in action it was quite something to see twenty-odd hounds working almost as one yet still responding to the sound of Daphne's hunting horn. After a few afternoons out I began to recognize individual hounds and the

way they work: the thrusters and the odd slacker, the ones who lead and the ones who follow and the odd couple that always seem to be off doing their own thing away from the rest of the pack. I have perhaps left it rather late to kindle an interest in hunting rather than shooting, but one thing is certain. Next winter, come Sunday afternoon, I will be back out with the barony Bassets.



Heading home - Daphne and Robert Thorne with the hounds.

Terrier, Lurcher and Whippet Show Roundup

Combined Canine Clubs Raceday and Dog Match, Laurencetown, 14th March

After a short journey from home, with dogs in tow and taking in a good hot breakfast along the way, we arrived at Laurencetown, the venue for the Combined Clubs Raceday and Dog Match. Although the weather was kind to us, there was a bitter cold chill in the air. But that did not dampen the spirits of the good Canine folk, who travelled from North and South. There was a brilliant turnout for the first show of the year. Even the King of the Castle himself, Mr A J Titterington and his good wife Irene were in attendance and it was very evident they were definitely enjoying their day. This was a busman's holiday for them, away from their very busy schedule organising the game fair at Shanes Castle, Saturday and Sunday 27th and 28th June.

Racing Results:

Lurcher Pups Gary Smith with Nidge
Whippet Pups Leroy Mc Cullough with Tizer

Whippets Susan Ernie McCann with Bella

Bull Cross Davy Downey with Kiera
Under 21s Deirdre McCoy with Taylor

Under 23 Elite Rose Mc Coy with Luna

Over 23 Elite Donal Smith with Prince

Traditional Lurcher: Karen Cummins with Harry

Many thanks to the organisers Tom Barry, his lovely wife Leanne and Dessie Mackin for a great day of sportsmanship. The craic was good and the show top class. Hopefully we will have many more days like this in the months ahead.

Tommy Cullen's Dog Show, Baltinglass, Co Wicklow, Sunday



The Combined Clubs Dog Show & Race Day - Under 21" Overall Racing Winner and Qualifier for the Master McGrath Deirdre Mc Coy with Taylor Over 23" Elite Qualifier for the Master McGrath Michael Quinn with Mo Charra. Whippet Coursing Winner Patsy McCoy with Rio.

29th March

Baltinglass is a town in south-west County Wicklow and is located on the River Slaney near the border with County Carlow and County Kildare. This midlands town is historically rich in its heritage, making a significant contribution to the towns character and surrounding areas. This was the venue and location for Tommy Cullen's 2nd annual Dog Show and Raceday.

Digging competition:

Winning Team: Danny Kavanagh and Matthew Walsh

Runners up: Trevor Moody and Jack O Toole

Showing Results:

Children's Handling Class: Sophie McNamara with Xena

Showing Results:

Champion Whippet: Michael Quinn with Finn (Qualified for Shanes Castle)

Champion Lurcher went to: Eoin Barnes from Dublin with his Lurcher Billy Boy (Qualified for Birr Castle)

Champion Terrier went to: Declan Owens with Moscow (Qualified for Birr Castle)

Overall Best in Show and Show

Champion went to: Eoin Barnes with his beautiful Lurcher Billy Boy

Racing Results:

Whippets: Mark Murphy's with Blue

Lurchers Elite Under 23: Sean

Coogan with Bellex

Bull Cross 1st Jed McDonagh with Shadow

Lurchers Under 23: Shakes Wall with Mikey

Lurchers Under 21: Michelle Rafferty with Fly

Rough Coated lurchers: Karen Cummins

Lurcher over 23 elite: Gary Smith with Bono

Thanks to Tommy Cullen for another brilliant show this year. It was evident Tommy had put a lot of hard work in behind the scenes to make this day most enjoyable for everyone.

Congratulations to all the worthy Champions and to all the rest of the winners on the day.

The Combined Clubs Dog Show and Raceday at Laurencetown, Banbridge, Sunday 12th April

We arrived at approximately 10.30am with already a very large crowd in attendance. There, standing

before me, was the King and Queen of the Great Game Fairs of Ireland at Shanes Castle and Birr Castle, A J Titterington and his lovely wife Irene. What a welcome surprise. Albert had his Linsay Carlisle walking stick with him, which he is very proud of.

Simulated Coursing: Fiona Devlin with Maverick

Showing Results:

Champion Puppy: Breandan

Coleman with Tara

Reserve Champion: Leroy McCullough with Tizer

Champion Strong Dog: BM Bulls with Sky

Reserve Champion: Davy Boyd with Smokey

Champion Strong Dog Puppy: Stuartry Moore

Champion Whippet and 5 Nations qualifier for Shanes Castle: Janet Duke with Oscar.

Reserve Champion: John Mc Stay with Patch

Champion Lurcher: James Woods with Rusty, 5 Nations Qualifier for Birr Castle

Reserve Champion: Davy Best with Daisy



Combined Clubs Overall Show Champion James Woods with Rusty.

Champion Terrier: Breandan

Coleman with Roxy and 5 Nations qualifier for Birr Castle

Reserve Champion: Declan Owens with Mossow

Overall Show Champion: James Woods with Rusty. What a deserving Champion.

Racing Results:

Under 21s and Qualifier for the Master McGrath at Shanes Castle: Deirdre McCoy with Taylor

Over 23 Elite Qualifier for the Master McGrath at Shanes Castle :Michael Quinn with Mo Charra
Congratulations to Deirdre and Michael - well done to both.



Combined Clubs Overall Puppy Show Champion Breandan Coleman with Tara & Reserve Leroy McCullough with Tizer.

Finally, Tom Barry presented Albert Titterington on behalf of the Combined Clubs, with a beautiful silver pocket watch in appreciation for everything Albert has done for country sports over the years. Albert also presented gifts to Tom Barry and Dessie Mackin on the day.

Tom and Dessie your team produced an excellent show, full of fun and enjoyment among like minded people, and I look forward to the many shows, you the Combined Clubs have planned for the rest of the summer.

Dessie Mackin's Dog Show and Raceday, Laurencetown, Saturday 25th April

Laurencetown is famous for its green fields and ancient building, but as well as these landmarks, and it's also famous for its dog shows and race days. The weather, although a little cold, was very welcoming and before we knew it the field had filled to capacity with dogs, trailers and families.

Simulated coursing: Fiona Devlin with Maverick

Showing Results:

Children's Handling Class Jodie Moore and her friends were over the moon winning with their lovely dogs. Congratulations to all as you were all winners in my eyes.

Overall Champion Puppy: Leroy McCullough with Tizer

Overall Whippet Champion: Janet Duke with Oscar (Qualifier for 5 Nations at Shanes Castle)

Reserve Champion: Michael Quinn with Finn

Overall Champion Lurcher: James



Dessie Mackin's show Overall Show Champion Declan Woods with Moscow and Reserve Janet Duke with Oscar.

Woods with Rusty (Qualifier for 5 Nations at Birr Castle)

Reserve Champion: Sean Burke with Jack

Overall Champion Terrier: Declan Owens with Mosco (Qualifier for 5 Nations at Birr Castle)

Reserve Champion: Conor Quinn with Bosco

Champion Staff Bitch was won by dog Nancy

Best in Show and Overall Show Champion: Declan Woods with Moscow

Straight Racing:

Qualifier for the Master McGrath: Billy Craigs with Cuckoo

Many thanks Dessie for a great show and a great day out. You have the knack of always running a good show.

The Wonderful Maverick

The word Maverick means not behaving in the same way as others. Well, this is very true in the Canine world for Fiona Devlin's winning lurcher Maverick. Yes, Maverick is in a league of his own. Having won the 5 Nations Lurcher Champion of Champions at Birr Castle twice, this unique faithful canine friend is still taking his place alongside his younger canine counterparts in racing and showing, resulting in the Devlin household coming down with trophies and rosettes.

Fiona, from Annaghmore, Co Tyrone is the very proud owner of this top class

winning lurcher. While the doggie birthday years are moving on for Maverick, he is still working in the field in the winter and winning in the ring and racecourse in the summer.

This veteran lurcher is still a force to be reckoned with. Keep going Maverick with your winning ways and may you have many more years of glory, as part of our brilliant countrysports scene.

Maverick Fact File

Maverick's dam was a winning track

greyhound, a daughter of the great Larkhill Jo. His father was a collie, greyhound / whippet cross owned by Conor Thomas of Armagh. He was a very useful hunter and a son of Turbo, who won the All Ireland Racing Championships at the Irish Game Fair at Shanes Castle.

Maverick proved to have exceptional pace stamina and was a very intelligent field companion with a wonderful temperament. He has largely dominated the over 23" racing from 2010 - 2013 in the north. He has won countless titles and championships including a double All Ireland Game Fair champion title, both racing and show; the 32 Counties Champion of Champions at Barntop and the Tullylish Champion of Champions; and he won the Five Nations Game Fair Championships in 2012 and 2013 under six different judges. He has surprised us by coming out of retirement after a cancer scare to now dominate the simulated coursing after winning back-to-back events.

(Below) Fiona Devlin and her lurcher Maverick.



Albert and the Prince

At times in one's life you meet physical challenges, which are in some ways fairly petty and rather meaningless, but yet immensely personally satisfying. Such was my encounter with a German Prince in the Scottish highlands.

Coming across a dusty old trophy of a fallow buck with the legend 'Perthshire 1985' reminded me of my encounter and that it was in 1978 that we first set out to shoot walked up grouse in Perthshire. To a team of guns largely brought up on farmyard and forestry shoots this was a real education. The four of us were teamed up by our host with three Scottish gentlemen which meant it was four very novice Northern Ireland guys teamed up with four experienced grouse shots, all of whom had fine side by side double barrelled guns and double barrelled names.

Apart from a serious disparity in the amount of names and quality of our Scottish companions guns there was a major disparity in the sartorial elegance of our dress. My NI friends had long hair, waxproof coats, moleskins and cord trousers and Hunter wellingtons, while our Scottish team had short back and sides haircuts and were very smartly dressed in well cut three piece tweed suits with breeks, collar and tie, fine coloured stockings and garters and a mix of brogues and hill boots. I was probably slightly further 'out of kilter' with heavy woollen shirt, moleskin climbing breeks with double seat and double knee and lightweight hiking boots. Apart from my cartridge belt I was more attired for our regular hiking trips to Glencoe and my NI friends more appropriately dressed for our regular rough shooting.

If our Scottish companions were surprised to see 'our lot' not clothed in Saville Row's finest, they were too well bred to say anything and they made us most welcome. The walking was hard, but the setter work effective and the grouse plentiful and when we broke for a well earned, superb picnic we had



A faded photo brings vivid memories of the 'Commando Keeper' with Mike Dickey (left) and the Author.

twelve and half brace in the bag. We, with our 'foreign made' guns, had acquitted ourselves rather well against the combined armoury of Dicksons, Purdeys and Cogswell & Harrison's, possibly because with one exception we were much younger and fitter than the other guns.

That afternoon and the following day we continued to find and have the opportunity of shooting excellent coveys of grouse and were totally hooked by the scenery, the dog work, the challenge of grouse exploding from the heather, the good companionship on the moors and the excellent 'apres shoot' hospitality in tartan bedecked hotels and pubs.

Every year until 2007 (when I got sidetracked by starting to organise the fair at Birr) we made the annual pilgrimage around the 12th of August to shoot two days of grouse in various different areas of the highlands. By that stage we had made nearly week of it,

shooting pigeon and rabbits on other days, stalking and having the odd 'rest day.'

In the mid 1980s we were still shooting with the original Scottish group in Perthshire and had really been looking forward to meeting up with what we called the 'double-barrellers.' By this stage of course most of our NI team were also bedecked in tweed — perhaps it was desire to be different or just practical for lightness, but I had gone even more technical with ventile breeks, canvas proofed shirt, my old canvas waistcoat with cartridge loops and the latest in lightweight hiking boots the KSBs; in fact my gear today is much the same.

The 'Prince' as we referred to him was a tall athletic looking six footer

When we met the first morning the fittest of the group Mervyn had been replaced by Robert H-S's new son in



The head from buck that 'went down in one go'.

law — a German Prince. The 'Prince' as we referred to him was a tall athletic looking six footer plus magnificently turned out in a finely cut and woven loden shooting suit and he was shooting one of his father-in-law's Purdeys. He rather kept himself to himself, perhaps as we thought not wishing to mix with the Irish 'hoi polloi.' I had very little conversation with him until the end of the day when he approached me to 'tell' me he was joining the stalker and me for a stalk the next day and informed me he would be using my rifle.

The next day we met up about noon and he, dressed in a different loden stalking suit together with a traditional hunting hat, looked a little disparagingly at my ex British army cammo jacket and rather grandly informed the stalker that he did not want to shoot fallow on the mountain as had been arranged but would rather stalk a roe. And in spite of it being my rifle, he announced that he would 'prefer' to shoot first. To say he 'got up my nose' was an understatement, but

World War 3 was avoided and we compromised when the stalker said he could possibly take the Prince off to the side of a valley where a buck often lay up during the day and we could then move round the mountain where there were definitely a couple of fallow bucks. We climbed up about a 1,000 feet into the saddle between the mountains and I peeled off left up into the hillside while the Prince and stalker worked their way in to the right. I had nearly an hour of relaxing in the heather in beautiful weather and a grandstand view through binoculars as they worked their way into the buck. I heard the stalker whistle the buck, which stood up and I then saw the buck fall, as the sound of the shot reverberated back to me; I thought 'one down one to go.'

The Prince was delegated the duty of gralloching his beast while the stalker worked his way up to me and we set off to move upwards and round the mountain. We soon spied the two bucks but the shot had obviously spooked them a little and they started to move

slowly up the mountain. We followed cautiously but it was about 90 minutes and about another 1,000 feet before we got into range just before they moved over another saddle and into another valley. I was invited to take the shot at about 150 yards and after finding a suitable knoll and calming my breathing, I took the shot. Thankfully the .270 with the 130 grain bullet was combination enough to stop the beast, literally dead in its tracks and the stalker and I moved up to gralloch it. The stalker suggested that he would go back, pick up the Prince and his beast and take them back to the Landrover, and come round for me if I dragged the beast down.

About an hour and a heavy pull later, the beast and I arrived at the track to find no stalker or Landrover but a very impatient Prince who informed me that the stalker had bogged the Landrover down, and had gone for assistance. And since he, the Prince, had a dinner engagement he and I had to make our way back to the stalker's house by foot — just a short distance of some 6 or 7 miles! At that he set off at a very athletic lope and I having had just had three hours of quite strenuous activity and carrying the rifle had to tuck in behind him.

I came into familiar ground and I decided to test his mettle

So began one of the most bizarre 'races' of my life. I was fairly fit then and some four stone lighter than I am now, but he had ten years, several inches in height and a couple of hours rest on me and I had the handicap of the rifle plus I had always been a sprinter not a long distance runner. Initially he started to pull away from me and looking round disparagingly appeared to quicken instead of slowing down as he saw me falling back. As he started to pull further ahead, I gritted my teeth and thought my grandfather and great uncles probably faced guys like you at the Somme and I'll show you what an Ulsterman's grit and determination is

like, and I forced myself to tuck in behind him. We must have looked a strange sight — a tall slim German in well cut clothing loping effortlessly along and shorter Irishman puffing along behind him, as without speaking we tested each other's resolve. About a couple miles from the stalkers cottage I came into familiar ground and I decided to test his mettle. I speeded up and we raced shoulder to shoulder for about another mile and although my feet were beginning to hurt and my toes probably rubbed raw, I noticed that my 'adversary' appeared to be somewhat under pressure, as his breathing had got heavier and his gait not so certain.

To my shame now but triumph then, I realised that I could 'break' his spirit and, falling back a little, I let him think he had the better of me when, with about a mile to go, I sprinted past him and 'left him for dead.' It is funny how the 'scent of victory' can give you wings and I literally sprinted the rest of

the way to the cottage. I arrived in splendid isolation to find my friends waiting for me and absolutely no sign of the Prince 'coming in' before we left for our hotel.

When the boots came off that night all my toes were raw and bleeding and a salt filled soak still left them painful for the next days' blackcock and grouse shooting. At one stage I thought of declaring myself 'unfit' as the day, led by the keeper nicknamed the 'Commando Keeper,' was sure to be strenuous. But I thought the Prince might claim a moral victory if I didn't 'take the field.' So each toe was lovingly treated with antiseptic and local anaesthetic cream and wrapped in Elastoplast and I was ready for the second round of my 'joust' with the Prince.

When their party arrived at the estate I asked the Prince how he was this morning and drawing himself up to his full height he pronounced himself to be

'fine.' His wife smiled and said he had sat through dinner with his feet soaking and he 'had cried like a baby' when she had treated them with iodine!

We started off in line in a slight mist and I knew the only way that I was going to get through the day was to tuck in beside the keeper and not fall back. After shooting a few greyhens and grouse we hit a very thick band of mist and head down I worked hard to keep up with the keeper. When we came up out of the mist we were in splendid isolation and the remnants of the line, including the Prince's father in law and three other guns, were on knolls a couple of hundred yards back. The Prince and his wife had 'retired from the field.'

Fortunately, the mist came down and we had to abandon the rest of the day, so I didn't have to fully test the repairs to my feet and I was able to retire with honour from the day having probably taught the Prince not 'to judge a book by its cover.'

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Huntsman Kenny Henry (r) and Whipper-In Barry Finnegan with the Meath Foxhounds at Ashfield Stud.

AROUND THE MEETS

Meath Foxhounds

McKeever's Public House in the quaintly named Yellow Furze area of Co Meath hosted the Meath Foxhounds' meet on a good, clear at times almost spring like day. Huntsman Kenny Henry hunts the doghound pack while his brother John jnr acts as field master and the roles are reversed when the bitches are hunting.

Kenny had on a 14½ couple pack with whippers-in Barry Finnegan and Brian Black assisting while John had charge of a seventy strong field which included all four joint masters, Andrew Boyd, Richard Trimble, Pat Dillon and Norman Williamson.

A hack to the impressive Ashfield Stud saw a fox afoot and running towards Austin's Quarry.

This fast hunt moved into Brownstown and continued at a fast pace right around the area before going to ground near Brownstown House. At this stage I had to leave but not before being impressed to see the dismounted Kenny Henry remove his cap to speak to some landowners which is the way hunting people should behave.

Ballymacad Foxhounds

The now annual Meath side-saddle meet was staged this year by the

Ballymacad Foxhounds and hosted by Michael Nugent at Ballinlough Castle, just outside Clonmellon, Co Westmeath.

A mounted field of one hundred and twenty five, approximately a third of whom were riding side-saddle, followed huntsman Kevin Donoghue, whippers-in Bobby Kellet, Maurice Quinn and Keith Broderick and a 12½ couple bitch pack to the first draw. Field master Ken Farrelly, despite the size of the field, was an oasis of smiling calm.

Kevin Donoghue drew from Ballinlough Castle into Michael Farrelly's then found a fox in Carr's Quarry and hounds moved, in patchy scenting conditions, with intermittent music, across Newtown towards Snyresbridge. Having circumnavigated the Heritage Trail hounds pushed hard on a second pilot, skirting Lough Shesk running towards Killallon. After a good, brisk hunt home was blown outside Clonmellon in time to allow everyone to get ready for the Hunt Ball.

With visitors from Europe, Great Britain, America and Canada this event has become a fixture in the Co Meath hunting calendar and one which is proving to be a popular attraction and a marvellous spectacle.

East Down Foxhounds

The East Down Foxhounds finished

their season with a meet at Listooder, near Saintfield.

Huntsman Declan Feeney had on a 14½ couple mixed pack while James Armstrong MFH, in his last meet as a Master, had a small but hardy field under his charge on this bright, blustery and bitterly cold day.

Hounds drew McRoberts's just off Listooder Road which was blank but a move to Mrs Mackay-Lewis's yielded a fox which ran towards McClurg's Mill and parallel to the main Crossgar to Saintfield Road, giving everyone a very brisk half mile gallop. This fox ran on to Killen's just off the old railway line then towards Kirk's Hills where hounds lost him in what was now a very strong wind.

Declan Feeney then drew a small covert along Kirk's River and put a fox afoot. He gave another sharp hunt before going to ground and being given best. A move into Kenny Moore's, whose daughter Sarah was among the mounted field, then along the old line proved blank. Having drawn all three coverts a hack to David Graham's farm at Raleagh saw hounds fare no better in his two bogs. Finally, on drawing Kelvin Watson's, hounds were rewarded as a fox went afoot but they could make nothing of it as scent now seemed to have completely disappeared.

Home was then blown in such

unfavourable conditions. Everyone wished James Armstrong, who was in office 2003-2015, 'all the best' on his final meet, none in the mounted field more so than ex-master Craig Caven, who was in office 1978-2013.

Galway Blazers

Craughwell lies right in the heart land of the Galway Blazers' hunt country and they finished their season there with a meet at Cawley's Bar.

Huntsman Tom Dempsey is off games with a back problem so whipper-in Nathan O'Connor, in his first season here having whipped-in at the Duhallow in his native Cork, is hunting hounds and he had on a 13½ couple mixed pack.

The seventy riders on view included joint masters Liam Clancy, Dr Rose Dempsey, Michael McDonagh, David McCarthy and Vincent Shields. Senior joint master Michael Dempsey, the huntsman's father, is recovering from a road traffic collision and was, for once, not among the car followers. Kevin Dempsey and Johnny Geoghan share the field mastering duties and each also produces a lorry load of quality hirelings, as does the Leahy family.

A bright spring like day, with some cool air did not seem to make for good scenting conditions so hounds had to work hard throughout the day. Nathan O'Connor's first draw, Coleman's at Aggard, saw hounds put their first fox afoot to run to Morrissey's wood where he was lost to poor scent.

A series of draws at Kilquane House saw another pilot afoot and, after a short, brisk hunt hounds accounted for



Rupert Macauley MFH with the West Wicklow Foxhounds on their visit to Crossgar, Co.Down.

their fox behind the House. Pat Slavin's held another customer but hounds could make nothing of this one and a move to John Kane's saw another fox afoot which gave a very brisk hunt before going to ground. O'Malley's produced the next fox which ran hard towards Seafin. He crossed the main Loughrea road but he, too, was lost to continuing poor scent. Nathan O'Connor drew the area behind Ballymanagh Church but this area proved blank so home was blown to finish the season.

The policy of only using local horses in this country always means more hirelings than might be found at other Hunts but, given the predominance of strong stone walls, shows the wisdom of the policy as an experienced "wall jumper" is required.

Sunnyland Beagles at Ballydugan House

My last meet of the season was also my first beagle meet when I visited the Sunnyland Beagles at Ballydugan House Downpatrick, where we were most generously entertained by Mrs Simone Beech.

Huntsman David Rodgers had on a 16½ couple mixed pack and was assisted by whippers-in Robert McIver, Neil Strain, Naomi Lister, Lee Beverland, Ally Watt and Emma Greer whilst some two dozen followers maintained a constant, but distant, presence.

Having enjoyed some refreshments the huntsman moved across the front of the House drawing steadily around the estate and parallel to the Downpatrick to Clough Road without success.

He then moved into the adjoining Hollymount Estate and drew around there. Hounds worked very hard for their huntsman on this bright day which was actually, at times, too warm for hounds.

Hounds had two hares afoot in Hollymount and we were able to enjoy some hound music which was, sadly, never long lived even in the trees. They were in much better voice on their first hare which was well spotted by your correspondent and his companions Dessie and Matthew Carvill.



Huntsman David Rodgers with the Sunnyland Beagles at Ballydugan House, Downpatrick.



Whippers-In Ian Bryson and James Hammond bring the Newry Hounds on at Annaghmore.

In Hollymount Dessie Carvill viewed a fox away and was able to alert the huntsman who recalled his hounds immediately. Scent had not seemed good, due to the heat, but though the first hare was hunted quite keenly in the early part of the afternoon scent did not appear to serve hounds well. Despite being well on terms with this hare they lost it due to the scenting conditions.

In late afternoon however, scent while still only patchy at least, gave hounds enough to work with on their second hare. This sharper hunt, right around Hollymount, also ended with this hare being lost. Everyone then repaired to the house for more of Simone Beech's hospitality.

Ireland's only private foot pack of Foxhounds

The Dungannon Foxhounds is Ireland's only private foot Foxhounds' pack and was formed by local hunting icon Harry Corr who was also master from 1945-1985 when he was succeeded by Kenneth Cahoon with whom Stuart McIver was in office 1972-1992. On his death Kenneth Cahoon was succeeded by the present

master and huntsman, Oliver Little, who has been in office since 2009.

Their meet at Castle Bay, Ardboe, Co Tyrone saw bright, sunny but cool weather with a, mercifully, very brief shower of hailstones. Chairman of the Northern Ireland Master of Hounds Association Bill Montgomery and I were driven by Colm McCrory, the Honorary Secretary, who is a grandson of Harry Corr's.

As I have previously reported, Oliver Little covers such a distance at such a pace that we need a car to keep up and today was to be no exception. Oliver Little had on a 12½ couple mixed pack of mainly Welsh hounds and was assisted by whippers-in Stephen O'Neill, Nicholas Laverty and Dermot McCann. This is a well foxed area on the shores of Lough Neagh and the first draw, at Wiley's Quay saw a fox go afoot and run into Davidson's Shore where, after a good hunt, he went to ground in a huge earth. A draw around the shore put another fox afoot and he ran to Dorman's where he was lost to poor scent. The third fox went afoot, from Davidson's Shore but after a very brisk hunt he, too, went to ground in the same huge earth.

Having some very tasty soup now available back at Castle Bay everyone was soon refreshed and Oliver Little drew from Castle Bay as far as Ballybay to put a fox afoot and this customer ran as far as Hanna's Shore where he went to ground. Watching Oliver Little hunt hounds on this blustery day showed good hound control with no raised voices and only necessary use of the hunting horn while hounds were steady to cattle and, especially, to the numerous, impressive hares seen throughout the day. Scent, seemingly, was now at an absolute premium though at 4.15pm hounds were still drawing with the same drive as at their first draw before 11am. Oliver Little continued to draw the Peat Bogs at Derryloughan and pushed on as far as King's Island before even he and his indefatigable hounds started to tire as 5.30pm passed.

Home was blown at King's Island to end a good hound day.

HEARD IT ON THE GRAPEVINE

Mark Casserly, huntsman to the Killultagh Old Rock and Chichester Hunt is moving to the Iveagh Foxhounds as huntsman.

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Cork Beagling Festival Is A Hit With Visitors And Locals



For several years I have said to myself I would like to participate in the festival of beagling in North Cork, but year after year it never happened; until 2015 when at last I experienced some of the week long festival.

The festival is organised by the Woodrock and Blackwater Valley Beagles, and Jack O'Connor. As usual there were two hunts each day and as usual the central hub for the festival was the village of Castletownroche which is surrounded by reasonably flat countryside which is very good for hunting.

Once again many English visitors made the journey across the water and once again they waxed lyrical about their hosts and the time they enjoyed. I joined them on the final couple of days and teamed up with about a hundred beaglers in Castletownroche, where much of the talk was about what a great dinner dance they had enjoyed the night before in the Hibernian Hotel in Mallow where 160 attended, some of them partying until 5 or 6 in the morning. A hunting song was performed outside the Castle Arms pub at 11am and then we drove to a nearby farm, where there was port, sandwiches and a few speeches expressing gratitude and appreciation, after which we set off, walking across large fields, many of which were recently seeded and therefore heavy going due to the softness of the soil and to the fact it clung to your boots.

The pack was the Chilmark and Clifton Foot Beagles with their

professional huntsman Simon Dunn and a pack of 15 couple. The hounds soon started speaking and for the next three and a half hours there was barely a pause. It was an outstanding chase, one of the best of my season, and in the evening I headed for home a very happy fellow.

Afterwards I chatted to Geoffrey Cox, Master of the Taw Vale Beagles, over a few pints in the Castle Arms and he was hugely positive about the way

this year's Beagling Festival panned out. Geoffrey has been coming to the festival for many years and he's a popular chap amidst his peers. He's one of the leaders during the week whom people turn to in order to find out what's happening next on the itinerary.

A couple of weeks later I telephoned him and asked him for a resume of the festival: "This was the greatest week of all," he told me. It was the most social week we've enjoyed throughout all the



Simon Dunn, Huntsman of the Chilmark and Clifton Beagles from Somerset, prior to setting out for yet another outstanding day's hunting during the weeklong beagling festival organised annually by the Woodrock and Blackwater Valley Beagles.

years of coming over, and there was a lot of craic and singing.” He said the welcome the English visitors were given by Jack O'Connor and his fellow Corkonians was incredible: “We were made to feel so welcome by Jack and his great team of people.” He pointed out that English beagle packs have been invited each year to hunt in north Cork for about 40 years. The festival takes an enormous amount of organisation and the English visitors were unanimously delighted to participate in an excellent event. Stephen Reynolds, Joint Master of the Pipewell Foot Beagles (which hunt in Northamptonshire and Rutland), echoed Geoffrey's sentiments: “We were looked after really well,” Stephen told me, “and enjoyed wonderful hospitality.”

Geoffrey Cox is a seasoned veteran and his story is an interesting one. He's been either a beagling huntsman or master for the last fifty years and the Taw Vale beagles are kennelled on his farm near South Malton in North Devon. Devon of course is a very scenic place and is a well hunted region. In the north of the county, the Taw Vale share their country with two packs of staghounds and four or five packs of foxhounds. The Taw Vale take their name from the River Taw and Geoffrey is fond of the region. “It's lovely country,” he said, “attractive, undulating pastureland.”

The Irish hare is difficult to hunt because it runs longer points

Geoffrey is also involved in a local hare conservation group, which ensures that areas remain well stocked with the quarry: “We enjoyed really good hunting throughout the week in Cork,” he told me, “with many of us hunting twice a day. The Irish hare is difficult to hunt because it runs longer points than the hare in England, which is a different species. In England we hunt the brown hare, whereas the Irish hare is an arctic type hare.”

At the end of the week came the



Huntsman Stevie McDonald and his pack.

dinner dance in the Hibernian Hotel in Mallow which was a great success.” The organisers sent out complimentary tickets for the dinner dance to the farmers who permit the hunt over their land. He said: “It was refreshing to see the energy during the dinner dance, with everyone out dancing on the floor immediately, not being shy. We danced 'til 4am and there were a few sore heads

the next morning, but they turned out for hunting nonetheless, even singing a few hunting songs.

About 70 people travelled over from England for the week from a number of different areas, including 24 people from the Taw Vale country, bringing a considerable amount of income into the Castletownroche / Mallow area. There was a concern that the English visitors



Simon Dunn and his pack hunting near Castletownroche.



Some of the gathering of 100 beaglers in a farmyard drinking port and eating sausages prior to setting out for a really good day's beagling on Saturday 7th of February.

wouldn't travel this year because of new passport and microchipping costs. "In the Taw Vale we had to get pet passports and have our dogs microchipped," commented Geoffrey, 'which cost us €1200 for all the dogs.' However the concerns were groundless and as many English visitors as ever arrived for the week, along with a healthy turnout of Irish beaglers.

Geoffrey was also very complimentary about the hunting prowess of the Woodrock and Blackwater Valley Beagles calling them a very good, Division One pack of hounds. I experienced this personally when I joined the Woodrock at 8am on my second day and followed huntsman Stephen McDonald and 10 couple. For four hours we hunted in a fog which was like peasoup but nonetheless still experienced good hunting, with the beagles finding two hares and speaking for about two hours.

After my second day of hunting, I joined about 20 other beaglers in the Castle Arms for a really good singing session. Some of the English beaglers sang such great hunting songs as 'One Bright Chanticleer', 'Six Fell Packs', 'Master Smith', 'The Duke of Buckingham', and 'Drink Puppy Drink'.

These songs were sometimes humorous, sometimes poignant.

Hearing these hunting songs made me subsequently track down hunting songs and poems in books and on the internet. A couple of stanzas from poems seemed to sum up how I sometimes felt during my two days beagling in the fields around Castletownroche. One of them was called 'See Ho!' by Christopher Curtis and the lines were:

'A merry sight the beaglers are,
With hounds and huntsman ranging far,
The woods and the hills throw back the sounds
Of horn and music of the hounds.'

The other lines are from a poem by Siegfried Sassoon:

'And when I woke,

Emily snored, and barn-cocks started crowing,
And morn was at the window; and I was glad
To be alive because I heard the cry
Of hounds like church-bells chiming on a Sunday.
Ay, that's the song I'd wish to hear in Heaven!
The cry of hounds was Heaven for me: I know
Parson would call me crazed and wrong to say it,
But where's the use of life and being glad
If God's not in your gladness?'

Some foot followers pause and watch the action from a rise during a hunt near Castletownroche.



An Almost Forgotten Hero

While memories and veterans of WW2 are beginning to fade, the dramatic events of dark days that shaped the future history of Europe have been well and truly recorded for posterity. Despite the accuracy of both stills film and cine camera, errors occasionally crept into the narrative and became accepted as fact. One such situation pertained around the demise of German tank ace Michael Wittman during the 1944 Normandy campaign. For decades the accepted version attributed credit to a Canadian unit and only in recent years has it been acknowledged that the Allied tank gunner who actually brought about Wittman's end was a young man from Northamptonshire – Joe Ekins.

Joe Ekins was a shoe-factory worker who volunteered for military service and served as a gunner in the Northamptonshire Yeomanry armoured regiment, which was equipped with US-made Sherman tanks. Simple to build, reliable and easy to drive, unfortunately the standard Sherman 75mm gun was no match for German Panthers or Tigers. This gun was later replaced by a 76mm tube which also proved inadequate. The only way the enemy tank could be defeated was by taking a shot at its thinner rear armour. Equipping a number of Shermans with a British 17-pounder gun finally resolved the problem — the modified tank being designated a Sherman Firefly. Ekins was trained in the use of the new gun and eventually his unit was posted to Normandy. Until then Joe had never seen action or fired the gun in anger.

Michael Wittman was a highly experienced tank commander – a favourite of the Nazi regime — who had been awarded the Knight's Cross with Oak Leaves and Swords. Hitler attended his wedding. His wartime active service commenced in Greece and continued on the Russian front until his posting to France. Credited with over one hundred tank kills in the East, he added considerably to this list by knocking out a string of British armoured vehicles in Villers-Bocage during June.

Serving with the Waffen SS 101st Panzer-Ableitung, Wittman led an advance group of six Tiger tanks from

Paris to Normandy specifically tasked to slow-down allied progress, arriving outside the small French town early on June 13th. The German armour halted in a sunken lane to avoid aerial detection, at the north end of the small town. A British armoured column, unaware of the enemy presence, arrived shortly afterwards and having left some vehicles in close proximity to the concealed Germans, halted the

column along the length of the downward-sloping Main Street.

Wittman's tank was hit and disabled

Shortly after 9am Wittman's tanks destroyed the nearby transport, then lumbered down the main street, firing on the move, destroying almost fifty British armoured including several tanks. Many contemporary accounts of



The Sherman Tank with 75mm gun was no match for the German Tigers or Panthers.



Joe Ekins, seated left at a Northumbrian shooting range.

the event fail to mention that the British fired back and Wittman's tank was hit and disabled, forcing him to abandon it and abscond across fields along with his crew.

The Allies held the town for five days before being forced to leave by newly arrived and overwhelming German reinforcements. By the end of August German forces in Normandy were finally shepherded into what became known world-wide as the Falaise Gap, where, cornered with their backs to the River Seine, those that managed to escape across the river did so leaving all heavy equipment, vehicles and armour behind. The destruction and number of casualties eventually inflicted plus prisoners taken by the Allies was astronomical.

Joe Ekins' group was launched into this cauldron to support a Canadian battle-group. Simultaneously, in a desperate rush to stem the Allied advance, Michael Wittman's Tiger tank was among a Waffen SS armoured unit approaching on the Falaise Road from the Thury-Harcourt front. The Tigers left the road to travel cross-country which brought them in close proximity to British tanks outside St. Aignan de Cramesnil. Ekin's was the only Sherman fitted with the latest 18-Pounder gun so it fell to his tank commander to make the decision of taking-on the Tigers, three of which were approaching in formation.

Knocking out a fourth Tiger tank



A Canadian Tank Destroyer built on a Sherman chassis and fitted with a 25 pounder gun.

In his first action of the war Joe Ekins knocked out the three tigers, completely destroying the turret on the third which was occupied by Michael Wittman. Later that morning Joe knocked out a fourth Tiger before his Sherman was hit and the crew forced to bale out. When his tank was struck from the left, the order "everyone out" was given by the commander. Joe was aware of the Sherman's propensity to burn when hit. He also knew that the driver would be unable to exit the burning tank unless the turret traversed away from the driver's hatch. Instead of jumping out, he stayed in his seat and swung the turret so that the driver could get out. All got away safely and lived to fight another day. This was the

action Joe was most proud of that day. At the time, he was unaware that it was Wittman's Tiger he had destroyed, killing Germany's most decorated tanker.

Because the British Shermans were there only in a supporting role for Canadian Infantry, the story spread rapidly that the Canadians had killed Wittman. This story persists even today, although clinical appraisals by military experts and historians have conclusively proven that it was Joe Ekins behind the gun on his Sherman that brought Wittman's 'exploits' to a final conclusion. A few years ago an in-depth documentary transmitted on UK television thoroughly investigated the evidence including a battlefield



Scale model depicting Wittman's damaged Tiger tank in Villers-Bocage 1944.



Villers-Bocage today showing the reconstructed Main Street where the action took place.

tour with the 1944 maps and witness reports, leaving no doubt as to how Wittman met his end. At the time of his death the German Ace was credited with a total of 138 tank kills. Wittman is buried in the German War Cemetery at La Cambe which is clearly visible to motorists driving the dual carriageway from Cherbourg to Caen.

Last March I visited the area in south Normandy still known as the Falaise Gap, driving the road Wittman had travelled that day in 1944. St. Aignon de Cramenil is still a

backwater where life goes quietly on. We travelled rolling countryside dotted with copses, hedges and Norman farmhouses as we headed for Caen via Aunay-sur-Odon and Villers-Bocage. Villers-Bocage, destroyed during the 5 days fighting in 1944 has been rebuilt, with its long sloping main street designed to facilitate modern traffic and parking. No evidence of those dark days remains, although the local tourist office is knowledgeable about the Wittman story. The Hotel de Ville displays a detailed scale model of

what the town looked like on June 13th including British armour and the shot-out Tiger.

Joe Ekins went back to work after the war, never seeking any recognition for his actions when he became aware of what had happened that day. The story eventually leaked out - even then Joe played down his part. He became a Factory Manager in the shoe trade, and passed away in 2012. But for the efforts of historians and researchers, Joe's story might never have been told.



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Art & Antiques

Well into the year and the art scene is holding its own.

Generally the sales scene is moving along at a steady pace. No one has yet predicted a return to the heady days of a pre-recession period but the prophets of doom have been silent for some time and there is cautious confidence that all things coming under the hammer will continue to find buyers and at prices which satisfy vendors.

To get an accurate picture of how things were going I spoke to James O'Halloran, Managing Director of ADAMS, the prestigious Dublin based auction house. He told me: "The first quarter of this year has been a particularly busy one at Adams with an Attic sale, an Interiors sale, a single owner sale of a collection of silver and an Irish art sale. All these sales have had very positive results with sold rates ranging from 75% in the Interiors sale to 85% in the Irish sale and over 96% in the silver sale. Good value is still expected by buyers

but, that being said, there is no impediment to purchasers paying strong prices when the object is worth pursuing.

"There was good interest in the antique furniture and some healthy prices were paid such as the €5500 for a four door breakfront bookcase which had carried an estimate of €3/5000 and a late Victorian satinwood marquetry writing table which made €4200 against a low of €1000. Silver also continues to do well with a Neo-Classical oval tray from 1793 making twice its estimated €4,000, a 1770 Dublin silver table centrepiece going at €12,000, while a Thomas Bolton of Dublin beer jug, dating to c.1700 selling for €8,500, which was well above its pre sale estimate of €1500.

"The Irish Art sale top price was the €42,000 paid for Jack Yeats's 'Hearing the Nightingale' from 1936, Louis Le Brocquy's diminutive oil from 1957,



The Edge's student guitar €21,000 (sold by Whytes)

Andy Warhol screenprint €3,800 (sold by Whytes)





Beatles 'Love me do' signed record €3,800 (sold by Whytes)



Louis Le Brocquy's 'Being' €30,00 (sold by Adams)

entitled 'Being' which was estimated at €8,000 but went on to make €30,000, confirming that his prices can still be excellent provided the rarity element is there. Father Jack Hanlon's 'Still life on table' also did much better than expected achieving a stronger price of €18,000 than when it was previously offered in the boom times. Frank McKelvey's 'Woman and child feeding chickens' did well at €16,000 against a low estimate of €10,000.

"All told the market is doing well and we noticed an increased number of Northern Irish and English-based buyers encouraged no doubt by the strength of Sterling. Over €660,000 was spent on the night on the 140 or so lots that sold and this provides us with plenty of positivity for the upcoming pre-summer sales."

The top ten from ADAMS were: Jack Yeats, €42,000; Louis Le Brocquy, €30,000; Father Jack Hanlon, €18,000; Daniel O'Neill €18,000; Edwin Hayes, €17,000; Frank McKelvey, €16,000; William John Leech, €16,000; Gerard Dillon, €14,000; Basil Blackshaw, €14,000; and Colin Middleton, €12,000.

The top ten in the Silver sale, which comprised over 400 lots and was from a private collection, reads like this: George I plain beer jug Dublin 1686/1736, €8,500; Irish pierced silver centre bowl and cover, Dublin 1898, €4,600; Victorian neo-classical four piece silver tea and coffee set, €4,400; solid silver cast figure of a racehorse, €4,300; fine Victorian Irish silver claret jug, €4,000; large Victorian silver monteith, London 1884, €4,000; large Victorian silver beer jug, €4,000; Irish George III pair sauce boats, €4,000; early Victorian silver claret jug, €3,800; Victorian claret jug racing trophy, London 1857, €3,600.

The Sunday Interiors sale drew a strong following with an Irish George III four branch centrepiece epergne, Dublin, 1770 going at €12,000; followed by a lady's Cartier Tank Fancise wristwatch making €8,200 and a 19th century four door breakfront bookcase coming under the hammer at €5,500. Other top lots included a Claude Pratt (1860-1935) oil on canvas, €4,600; satinwood kidney shaped writing desk, €4,200; George III neoclassical oval silver tray, €4,000; early 19th century mahogany bookcase, €4,000; mahogany canteen of silver flatware, €3,800; Alfred De Breanski Snr, oil on canvas, €3,600; and an 18th century rose gold open face key-wind pocket watch by Lepine, €3,200.

WHYTES

At their March sale, Whytes sold a Louis Le Brocquy screenprint for €3,200, a Charles Lamb at €2,300 and a Gracy Henry at €1,000. An Andy Warhol screen-print went at €3,800, while a special limited edition book, *The Lie of the Land* by renowned artist Desmond Carrick RHA along with an oil pastel realised €70.

ROCK, POP & MOVIES

Whytes also held a Rock, Pop and Movies sale in March, during which a Malcolm Young T-shirt sold for €600 and an Anastacia Double Platinum award disc went for €320. But major interest centred around U2 and the Edge's student guitar, signed of course, which went at €21,000 against a low estimate of €3,000 and their Joshua Tree record sold for €1250. A Neil Young signed guitar made €580 while one signed by Bob Dylan went at €1050 and a 1917 Gibson A1 mandolin realised €2,000.

Among other prices were: Beatles 'Love me do' signed record, €3,800; Goldfinger poster, €2,000; Thunderball poster, €1900; Black Sabbath Greatest hits, €100; Blondie, *Parallel Lines*, €380; David Bowie signed album €240; Westlife 'Coast to Coast' €150; 'Love album' €200; Cream, signed guitar, €750; Rory Gallagher, *Tattoo*, €480; Jimi Hendrix painted leather strap, €850; guitar signed by BB King, Carlos Santana, Jeff Beck and Eric Clapton, €950; Rolling Stones autographs, €580; Thin Lizzy, promotional poster, €660; U2 autographed album, €460; signed album €420; War, signed, €500; *Tick Tock*, €660; The Who, *My Generation*, €500; Al Pacino *Scarface* soundtrack signed, €190; and a *Bridge on the River Kwai* poster, €400.



Father Jack Hanlon's 'Still life on table' €18,000 (sold by Adams)



Solid silver cast figure of a racehorse €4,300 (sold by Adams)



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Originally a coaching inn, the Four Trees has sat at the heart of the village of Moira since the 17th century but time has not stood still! Now under the ownership of Philip Patterson, the Four Trees has had new life breathed into it and that's especially evident on the menu. Emma Cowan visited to sample for herself.

Chemist turned cook puts Four Trees on the menu



WELL, IF YOU'RE a *Breaking Bad* fan, you'll definitely have picked up on the "chemist turns cook" pun but, although he did work in the School of Chemistry at Queen's University for nine years, Philip Patterson is concentrating his efforts on cooking really good food – indeed, truth be told, it is not he but his head chef Aaron Heasley who creates the chemistry in the kitchen. As for Philip, having made a substantial investment in refurbishing the entire premises, outside and in, and in putting the right staff in place, ably assisted by Manager, Kerrie McCartney, he has completely restored the Four Trees as a good old fashioned, family pub, with bucketloads of warm welcome.

I've been a fairly regular visitor to the Four Trees over the last decade, so I speak with authority when I say that the place is genuinely transformed. Gone are the Grecian pillar effects on the supporting steel columns (what a relief) and gone too are the rather tired and faded murals 'celebrating' the four seasons. Instead, I waked into an inviting and reassuringly modest coaching inn turned village pub where, happily, the snugs have stayed put. The wooden floor gleamed with its daily polish and the dark wood panelling created a sense of history. I could imagine the weary traveller of days gone by feeling warm, safe and comfortable in here.

The ground floor of the Four Trees is L-shaped, with the bar running along the inner wall and into the return and the main area – a mix of snugs,

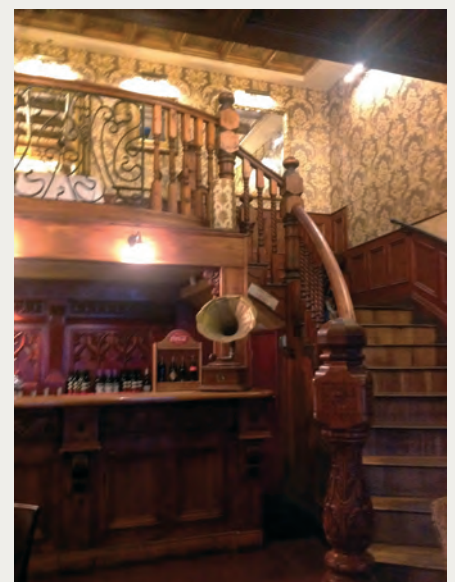
tables and bar seating – stretches the length of the building. The return, which is raised from the main floor and carpeted, has been re-created as a library lounge, but one with a difference. The seats here are comfy armchairs and sofas with low tables and it would be a great place to relax over a good book. Well, that's exactly what you can now do in the Four Trees library, which has a selection of stock books and a book exchange scheme. The concept is simple. Browse the shelves and pick a book you fancy reading, there's quite a choice from autobiography to the latest crime fiction. Of course, you're not likely to read it in one sitting but that's the idea; you take that book with you and, next time you visit, either return it or replace it with another. 'The book exchange has really taken off and quickly become a favourite with our regulars,' said Philip. 'It's just an added extra that runs itself and makes the Four Trees that little bit more interesting. You can't beat a good book and now our customers can take time out here to enjoy the luxury.'

With quite a few years' experience of reviewing pubs and eating houses, there are two things that I always include in my tour; a coffee and the inevitable visit to the ladies' room afterwards. Latte or flat white is my caffeine of choice and I'm pleased to be able to tell you that Four Trees lattes are very good, the right temperature, smooth and delivering coffee with a punch despite the added milk. Delicious. Half an hour later and it's on to the rest rooms! I well remember

the cold, slightly damp smelling 'ladies' of old. Gone! Well, it's the same structural facility, but it has been beautifully and, Philip told me, expensively refurbished. Welcome to more of that dark panelling effect, pristine cleanliness and fresh smell, complete with a little basket of helpful aids to female preening – cotton wool, hand cream and the like. I was so impressed that I peeked into the gents too and found the same décor scheme and clean environment. Philip has also added baby changing facilities in the large, similarly fitted disabled toilet.

Talking to Philip I discovered that his family friendly policies extended well beyond baby changing. He's has special lower armchairs installed in the library for breastfeeding mums, as well as a couple of quiet tables up on the balcony overlooking the library for the same purpose – or for those who just want a little bit more privacy. Outside in the gardens – a great play area in itself, he has bought a bouncy castle as a permanent installation and in the rugby bar, located in the barn building across the courtyard from the main pub, he exerts a friendly but firm control over excessive loudness, raucous language and any behaviour that is not suitable for family fun. Of course, that's not to say that the rugby bar isn't great craic, just that it's a great place watch the big matches with or without the kids in tow.

You'd near enough think this wasn't a public house, for I've not mentioned the drinks at all. If you've been in the Four Trees before, you'll know that it's



a pretty big bar and it is exceptionally well stocked. Here is where Philip's background makes a mark for, not only has he previously refurbished and managed a portfolio of venues for the owners, he has also spent several years working for InBev (still affectionately known by old-timers as Bass Ireland, which has been a great supporter of country sports in the past). As a result, Philip's seen the licensed trade from both sides of the fence, as operator and as supplier and he knows what drinks make for a good bar. Expect all your favourites in the bottle and keg and an excellent range of spirits.

'I'm very proud of my Irish Whiskey collection,' said Philip. 'We have 14 Irish whiskeys in total, including Yellow Spot Single Pot Still, Red Breast 12yo, Middleton very rare, Tyrconnel, Connemara, Teeling and, of course, Bushmills and Jamesons. We got some very nice Scotch behind the bar as well, like Glenfarclan 15yo single malt, and of course XO Hennessey cognac, which goes well with our Cuban cigar collection.'

Talking of cigars and other things tobacco, it would be remiss of me not to mention the private and sheltered beer garden in the courtyard between bar and barn, which, incidentally can accommodate up to 250 people for private functions. Indeed, every space in the Four Trees is available for private hire and apparently it is a popular spot for both 'big people' and children's parties.

I started off with the food and, while I didn't eat the day I visited, I did sneak back for a bite of lunch incognito. On my first visit, I had a tour of the kitchens - large, spotless, immaculately organised and very busy. Philip and his chef, Aaron Heasley (who trained under Tony O'Neill of The Merchant and Il Pirata acclaim) think as one when it comes to food. 'It's got to be authentically modern Irish - you don't go to a pub in



any part of Ireland to eat Thai or Indian - our own food is great and it's what's right for us,' said Philip. 'We source as much as we can locally; we get our meat from Trevor Kennedy down the street or from Hannan Meats and our seafood from Ewings, Elmore and Keenan's, available vegetables from Carnreagh Cottage and we use local products like Glastry Farm ice-cream, Draynes Farm milk and Abernethy butter.' I'm assured that in the season, game will also be on the menu, again locally sourced from Maurice Smith.

Knowing all this I was looking forward to sampling the food and I wasn't disappointed. The menu was as promised, good local food but I never can go by the promise of hand cooked cod and chips so that was what I had. Delicious! The fish was so fresh, expertly battered and cooked and the crushed peas and chips the perfect accompaniment. I understand that the

next phase of the new Four Trees, an Italian restaurant in the upper floor of the barn, will be open for action any day now and it will definitely be on my visit list.

All in all, I was very impressed with the new look, new menu, family-friendly and bookwormish Four Trees. In addition to the food and rugby bar offering, the venue features live music, including bluegrass on a Sunday night and has even become the venue for Moira's craft fair, bringing up to 30 exhibitors in on the first Saturday of every month. Philip is also planning to host Moira's first craft beer festival in the summer and is working on bringing the village's historic reputation back to life by hosting a food and flower festival. If you haven't been to the new-and-improved Four Trees already, I suggest you give it a go.



The Four Trees Bar & Restaurant
61 Main Street, Moira, BT67 0LQ. T: 028 9261 1437



The Teckel's Tale (Part 1)

Short on the leg, long on the back with a bay deeper than a bloodhound, the Teckel is a formidable little character.

Often thought of as simply a novelty pet dog, most people rarely get to see the real side of these keen little workers. They have been adored by the French, revered by the German aristocracy and used in their namesake since their appearance over four hundred years ago. But what exactly is a Teckel? Here in the United Kingdom, quite strangely a Teckel is a working version of a Dachshund with the word Dachshund seeming to be the reserve of pet or show dogs. In Europe however, a Teckel is a Teckel regardless of whether he or she hunts or not. There are six types in the breed in the UK, with the standard and miniature sizes encompassing all three coat types, long, wire and smooth. But in Germany there are 9 in total, with three sizes for each coat. There is Kaninchen (Rabbit), Zwerg (Dwarf) and Normal (Standard). But what exactly is the make up of these little dogs, where did they come from and what do they do?

The Dachshund has long been associated with Germany and it is thought they have been in existence for

over 400 years. It has been discovered that they were brought to Germany during the revolution by French refugees and were taken up in use by German estates and gamekeepers to control vermin, they had a great standing among the German aristocracy where they lived alongside their owners in their homes and worked tirelessly on the estates.

Where they came from before arriving in Germany with the French has been lost in time and nobody really quite knows. Their breeding has long been a bone of contention too, with some sides claiming terrier blood and others claiming hound ancestry.

Robert Leighton wrote of the Dachshund and its breeding in 1922 : “Wonderful powers of scent, long pendulous ears and enormous bone structure speaks of his decent from hounds, while his small stature, iron heart and willingness to go to ground bespeak the terrier heritage.” Leighton really could not speak highly enough of the adaptability of the Teckel:

“Remarkable steadiness, ability to work

out the coldest scent, good voice when on line, incredible pace over ground combined with trainability and absence of terrier mischief!”

The very name ‘Dachshund’ is pronounced ‘Daks Hund’ and not ‘Dash Hound.’ ‘Badger dog’ is the literal translation and this remains their vocation in parts of Europe, where badger digging remains not only legal but a perfectly respectable vocation. They have always been a multi purpose breed however and can be found across the world carrying out many different jobs from hunting and dispatching vermin from rats to rabbits, flushing foxes to the gun from below ground, tracking wounded deer, elk or moose, to flushing and retrieving game birds for guns or falconers. In countries like Spain they are in great demand for driving boar to guns, and with two or three couple working in a pack they can make even the wildest Boar move to where they want him.

First brought to England in the early 18th Century by Prince Albert who acquired some Dachshunds bred by Prince Edward of Saxe Weimar, it didn’t take long for the quiet, unassuming Teckel with his multipurpose skills to become very popular indeed and it was around 1881 when the first British working Dachshund club was formed.

In the 1940s, the founder of a Working Dachshund club, Wendy Annette Riley, author of “The Wisdom of the simple” a book of working Dachshunds and a keeper, worker and enthusiast of the genuine working Teckel. Wendy hunted her dogs as a pack at a great variation of quarry and when spoke of the working Dachshund she stated that they were easy to train to poultry and stock, and not aggressive with other pack dogs. When trained and



This fox was successfully flushed and shot.

(photo courtesy of Waldmeister Dachshunds)

exercised together fighting was unheard of and they hunted together rather than splitting off and individual lines. Later in 1948, she wrote: "To see a pack of Dachshunds hunting across country is like watching ripples and small waves moving". She also found them 'businesslike about their hunting, as well as tenacious, untiring and essentially honest with such accurate noses that time is rarely wasted on an uninhabited earth or warren.' Mr Rennie Hoare found them equally as good, and worked four couples as a pack on his estate in 1959 and successfully exterminated the entire rabbit population before the onset of myxomatosis.

Aiming to preserve the Teckel's hunting heritage

Their popularity has grown ever stronger and there are now some well established Teckel Breeders across the United Kingdom who quite rightly seek to preserve the Teckels hunting heritage. One of these is Bern Holt from Waldmeister Dachshunds, originally from Berlin, Bern has been keeping and breeding Zwerg (Miniature) Wire Haired Teckels for many years and while his kennel has collected endless rosettes from the Show Ring including best of Breed at Crufts 2014 with Waldmeister Samuel JW, he aims to preserve the hunting heritage in the Teckel and quite proudly lists the foxes, rats and other various that his rosette collecting Teckels have accounted for in their careers. It is fantastic that the Dachshunds have working Kennels like Bern and his wife Susan on their side, because all too often the true hunting heritage of breeds has been and continues to be lost to the show ring, long may he continue. A friend I speak with regularly in the USA, Teddy Moritz has kept Teckels over thirty years and she often regales her tales to me of her daily hunts, when she uses her Teckels to flush animals to her Harris Hawks and to work groundhogs and racoons below ground. One of her hardest working Teckels is a



Single minded - 'Bane' after a squirrel

(photo courtesy of T. Moritz)

long haired miniature, not a type considered a worker by many, but young Bane could put a lot of dogs to shame, he is pictured here after having climbed a very large tree after a squirrel, which he would not leave even after baying at it for over half an hour, he is a very driven dog indeed.

You simply can't teach 'Stöbern'

John Edwards of Darswed Teckels is another successful worker and breeder. His original dogs were imported from Europe, John has really become well known in the tracking dog circles for producing quality working Teckels, focused on tracking deer. In some countries it is a legal requirement that a stalker either owns, or has access to a tracking dog if he is to obtain a deer stalking licence. This legislation has been in place for several decades and quite rightly so. In tracking wounded deer after being shot, the Teckel will wear a harness attached to a long lead so as not to stray too far from the handler. The dog is taken to the exact area where the deer was 'struck' and sets about finding any resulting blood loss in the immediate vicinity. From that initial area the Teckel can then use his long ears and keen nose to track to where it has ended up, many times up to over a mile or more. I have read of several incidents where Teckels have been taken to an area and recovered deer up to 48 hours after they were shot, all from small specks of blood

splattered here and there from a wounded animal — now that is using your nose! Teckel tests and trails are taken very seriously in Europe and there are up to 11 working certificates that can be obtained by a handler and his dog ranging from tracking, forest certificate, finding game, badger, fox, rabbit, etc. Here in the UK, there are no official trials, however there are days organised by several working clubs and awards are given to dogs who can attain the various levels from bronze to gold and encompasses blood tracking, finding shot game and retrieving a duck off the water. "They can be trained in most circumstances to carry out most tasks" says Klaus Reinhard of Germany. "But what cannot be taught is Stöbern." Stöbern is simply the hunting instinct, the drive that makes them search differently than other Hounds or spaniels, in a slightly slower and more intense style. Stöbern is also tested, and Teckels can gain a certificate, but it's like a light switch it is either on or off from birth.

I hope to see you at the Irish Game Fair at Shanes Castle on 27th and 28th June, where I'll be in the Main Arena with the longnets and my dogs, explaining the old time methods of rabbit control. Who knows, the Victorian Poacher could well be along as well. Bye for now!

Next time, Steven tells readers what the future has in store for his own hunting and these little dogs



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Stevie Munn demonstrating some casting techniques on his beloved Sixmilewater at the launch of the Irish Game Fair. Stevie will be giving demonstrations at the Game Fair at Shanes Castle on the 27th & 28th June.



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ANGLING at The Irish Game Fair



Speaking at the launch of the Game Fair at Antrim's Six Mile Water River, Director Albert Titterington said: "Each year we build on success and I am delighted to announce that the NI Angling Show which we introduced as a show-within-a-show last year proved so successful that it will now be an annual highpoint. Angling is, famously, one of this country's most popular participation sports so it is fitting that it should have its own major annual showcase, giving an important new dimension and vibrancy to a Game Fair which already encompasses the broadest possible range of country sports and pursuits."

"Over the next weeks and months we will be unveiling details about the special headline attractions, country sports challenges and family entertainment which will make the 2015 Fair one of the most diverse and exciting ever staged in Northern Ireland, but it is perhaps fitting that we get the ball rolling with news of the great fishing festival, actively supported by the DCAL Fisheries Division and the ROI's Inland Fisheries Ireland, which will be such an attractive core element of the Shane's Castle event."

John Blair from DCAL stated "DCAL Inland Fisheries Group is delighted to support and attend the Irish Game Fair at Shane's Castle as a main exhibitor at the event. Previous years have shown us that this Fair, with its many thousands of visitors, is an ideal opportunity to engage with our established customers and the wider public. It is also a tremendous benefit that we have been able to work with the Fair organisers to provide entrance fee discount vouchers for DCAL Angling

Licence holders.

It was also most encouraging that, as a result of discussions at last year's show, the Department was also able to engage with groups who assist adults and children with special needs. This engagement is most helpful in helping the Department meet NI Executive targets which are focussed on promoting equality through tackling poverty and preventing social exclusion."

And demonstrating the All Ireland support enjoyed by the Great Game Fairs of Ireland, Suzanne Campion, Head of Business Development within Inland Fisheries Ireland, which will be at Shane's Castle for the first time this year, shares that enthusiasm, saying her organisation is looking forward to 'a Great Game Fair', adding, "We look forward to meeting old friends and those yet to experience the wonderful fishing opportunities on offer. Whether you wish to fish in Donegal or Dingle or anywhere in between, our experts will be on hand at Shane's Castle with advice and tips."



North/South co-operation Michael Martin, Sixmilewater Trust and author of acclaimed articles in *The Irish Game Angler* insert in the *Irish Countrysports* and *Country Life* magazine discusses future subjects for articles with David Byrne from Inland Fisheries Ireland



Stevie Munn gives Director Albert Titterington some advice on flies for County Antrim Rivers.

Support from Inland Fisheries Ireland and the Department of Agriculture, Environment & Rural Affairs will support discounted admission of anglers visiting the Shane's Castle Fair and its sister event at Birr Castle, County Offaly in August. Discounts are accessed via a special voucher available from tackle dealers North and South.

ANGLING FOR EVERYONE - The NEW NI ANGLING SHOW

will be an integral part of THE IRISH GAME FAIR, SHANES CASTLE, ANTRIM
on the 27th & 28th June 2015

The angling show features an increased number of stands featuring fisheries, tackle dealers, boats, and representative organisations, fly tying, casting instruction & demos, competitions and a put and take fishery for kids. PLUS major information stands by DCAL and Inland Fisheries Ireland and obviously access to all the attractions of Ireland's largest country sports event set in the stunning traditional setting of the Shanes Castle Estate. New attractions include medieval jousting and a Viking encampment plus the Fine Food Festival with a celebrity chef cooking all types of fish dishes including Lough Neagh eels.

For further details see: www.irishgamefair.com E: irishgamefair@btinternet.com
or Tel : 028 44839167

The Angling Show is supported by **DCAL** and all DCAL permit holders or licence holders can have a £5 voucher for admission off the cost of an adult ticket (normally £10); a family ticket (normally £25) or will cover a child's admission (normally £5). To activate this voucher simply put in your permit/licence no below and present the voucher at the gate:

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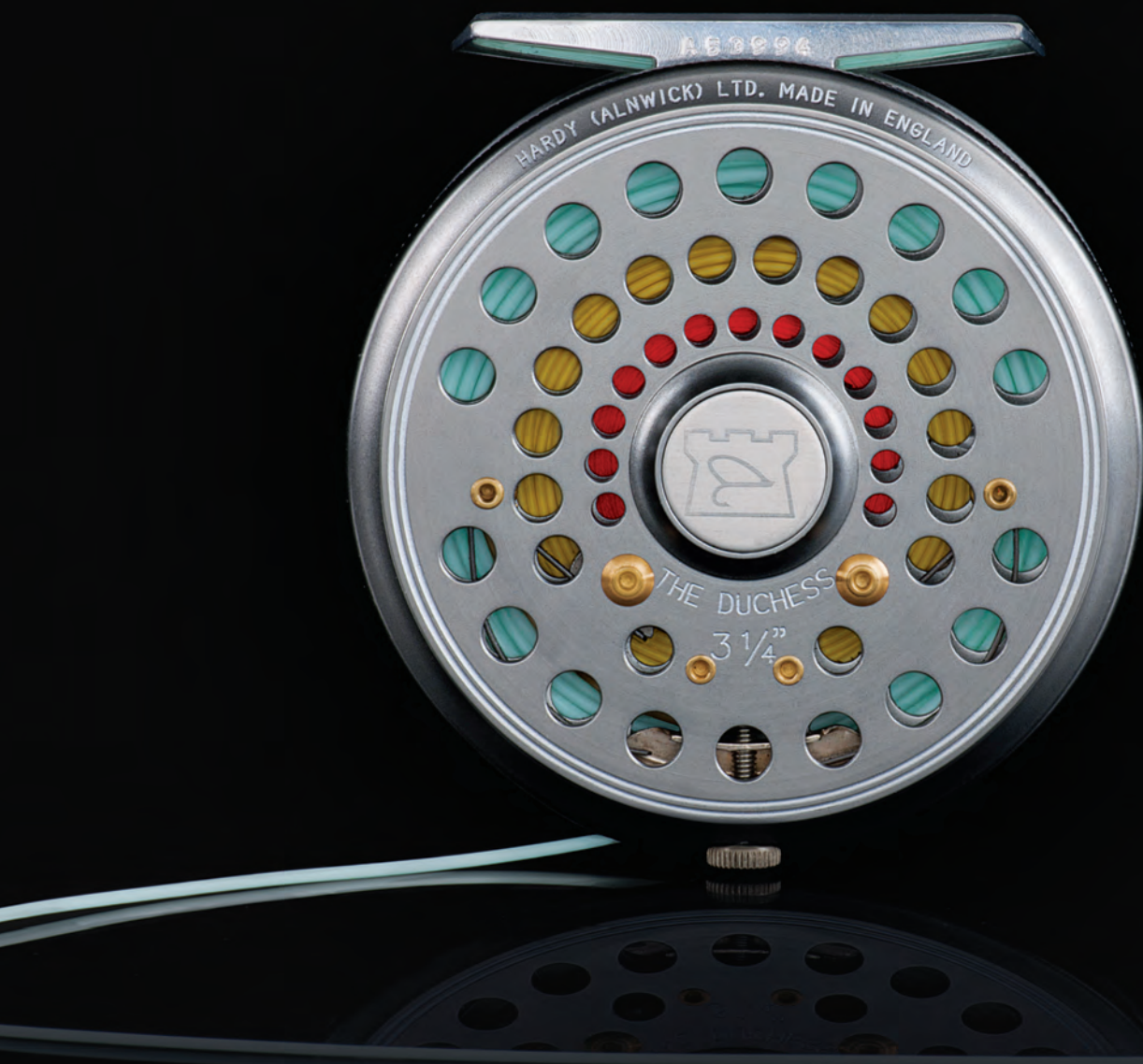
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Ashley Graham of Countryside Alliance Ireland (CAI) is once again delighted to be involved with Shane's Castle event. She says, "Situated within magnificent surroundings and with attractions to suit all ages and interests, the Fair provides a great day out for all the family. The Fair also gives CAI the ideal opportunity to showcase our work while engaging with members, potential members and the public in general. Exhibiting alongside CAI will be the NI Branch of the British Deer Society and we are pleased to sponsor various events including clay pigeon shooting, terriers and lurchers and Keith Mathew's Arena events. We would love to see you, so please do come along to see us and show your support for country sports and our rural heritage."

Support, too, from the influential Scottish Association for Country Sports for Shooting & Conservation. Alex Stoddart from the SACS says, "Angling is so much part of the country sports heritage of Northern Ireland and we are delighted to be part of the grassroots 'angling for everyone' initiative.

"For over twenty years, SACS has supported anglers across the UK in challenging lease and legislative matters, political lobbying and also in getting more young people out fishing, enjoying nature's harvest and the wild outdoors. We look forward to supporting the work of key partners, such as Inland Fisheries Ireland, the Association of Professional Game Angling Instructors Ireland and all the hard-working local angling organisations."



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What's on offer for anglers at Shanes Castle



Game Fair Director Albert Titterington with Joe Stitt and Arthur Greenwood from APGAI Ireland who will, as usual be playing a very big part in the fair; Clive Lawther from SACS joint sponsors of the Put and Take Fishery and Gary Lavery representing the Ulster Angling Federation.

Apart from angling tackle, clothing and boat stands the fair is supported by the major angling organisations who will be exhibiting and the focus of the fair is very much on the young.

This focus on introducing children which was piloted last year, proved enormously successful, as Mark Tierney from NSN explains, "Due to the volume of visitors last year, we welcome the assistance from Loughmacrory Angling Club who have five newly qualified Level 1 Angling Coaches willing to assist us during the event. We learned a lot last year and hope to put what we learned to good use and make the whole experience much more enjoyable. The whole package entails dropping in to the APGAI Ireland Fly Dressers stand to tie up a fly, have a few casting lessons with the APGAI Ireland Casting Instructors, and then come catch a rainbow trout which can be taken home for the table, cooked on site by celebrity chef Emmett McCourt – author of the award winning Book 'Feast or Famine' or released if preferred.

So, bring your kids along to our stand which is located on the way out of the fair right on the shore of the Lough. We would like to recognise the contribution that DCAL's Inland Fisheries have made this year again with the donation of trout and we would also like to thank George Kelly from Milbro for the donation of rods for the event and Loughmacrory Anglers for the loan of extra equipment if

required. Permitted methods will be fly in designated areas and bait fishing in a designated area."

And of course Emmett McCourt, no mean angler himself, will be featuring many game and fish dishes including Lough Neagh eels in his kitchen in the Fine Food Pavilion.

To view the promotional video of Angling at the Game Fair see <https://vimeo.com/127139082>



Antrim Mayor Councillor Thomas Hogg looks forward to sampling some of the Lough Neagh Eels which will be cooked at the Fair by celebrity chef, Emmett McCourt, author of the award winning book 'Feast or Famine'. Taxidermist and Game Fair presenter Ingrid Houwers will also be demonstrating her skills.

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Booking information regarding the following fisheries and others is available via the website.

Donegal's unique position on the edge of the European continental shelf, where the inshore waters are warmed by the North Atlantic Drift means that the native marine life is extremely rich and varied. We offer a wide variety of sea angling challenges by 7 charter boat operators. You can fish for around 35 species ranging from general stocks such as mackerel, pollock, coalfish, cod, haddock, whiting and thornback ray through to more specialist quarry such as shark and skate. Shore angling is also available throughout the county.

Lough Beagh is located in the heart of Glenveagh National Park and is overlooked by Glenveagh Castle. It is one of the most pristine natural environments found anywhere. It is primarily a sea trout and brown trout fishery but can produce the occasional salmon.

The Dunfanaghy fishery comprises three lakes: New Lake, Sessiagh Lough and Port Lough - managed by the Dunfanaghy Angling Association. The lakes are all noted for their wild brown trout with New Lake in particular thought to be one of the best brown trout fisheries in County Donegal.

The Clady River flows through wild moorland for around 5 miles (8km) draining Lough Nacung at Gweedore and flowing through Bunbeg to join the Crolly River estuary. Access to the river is relatively easy and it is fished over 2 beats. The Clady gets a good run of grilse with the odd autumn salmon - the best of the run occurs at the end of June and during July. There is also a run of sea trout, which is at its best at the end of August.

The Owenea is another of Donegal's most famous rivers - a 13 mile spate water consisting of 9 beats. It is managed by Inland Fisheries Ireland and is a proven salmon and sea trout fishery, beautifully maintained with lots of named pools. Visitor facilities are excellent, and include facilities for wheelchair anglers.

The Eske is a 3-mile river flowing from the 900 acre Lough Eske through Donegal Town to the Atlantic Ocean in Donegal Bay. The fishery is well known for its spring salmon, grilse, sea trout, brown trout and char. It is beautifully located against the backdrop of the Blue Stack Mountains. Substantial investment has been made by Inland Fisheries Ireland in these waters over the past ten years including a new angling centre, boat jetty and salmon fish pass.



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

First, may I apologise for the mistake in listing the 2014 National Executive Council in the last issue and to correct matters please see below:

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Tel/Fax 074 9730300 dgl1@indigo.ie

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Co. Kerry.
Tel: 087 9903739 odohertydonal@yahoo.co.uk

ASST. TREASURER: MR. RICHARD
BEHAL, 68 Arbutus Grove, Deerpark,
Killarney, Co. Kerry. Tel/Fax 087 4100691.

North-Western River Basin District & Loughs Agency

MR. BRIAN CHARLES MAXWELL,
Anahorish, Portnauhy, Leggs, Enniskillen, Co.
Fermanagh. BT93 2BE
max28394@gmail.com

MR. DAVY STINSON, Dreenan Cottage,
Dreenan, Boa Island, Kesh, Co. Fermanagh.
BT93 8AA

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MR. ROY MORTIMER, Brimor,
Derryronane, Swinford, Co. Mayo. Te: 094
9251273 mortimerbrimor@eircom.net

Western River Basin District:

MR BILLY SMYTH, 10 Colemans Rd,
Shantalla, Galway. Tel: 086 3511628

MR. TOM MORAN, HIBERNIA, Mill St
Westport, Co. Mayo. Tel: 087 2915013

MR TOM BOURKE, Loughloon, Westport,
Co Mayo. Tel: 086 8331586
tbourkefishingwestport@gmail.com

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MR. DAVID MAGILL, Killiney. Co
Dublin. Tel. 087 8173926.
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Mr JOHN CARROLL, Kilcassey House,
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john@jgskinner.ie

Shannon River Basin District:

MR STEPHEN PRENDIVILLE,
Gurtreen, Killocrim, Listowel, Co. Kerry. 087
7441810 stephenprendiville@hotmail.com

MR. KEVIN HANNAN, 16 Pennywell Rd,
Limerick. Tel: 086 058 5554
caoimhinhannan@yahoo.co.uk

MR. PADDY GUERIN, KINGFISHER
Castleconnell, Co. Limerick. Tel: 087
2922413 paddyguerin@eircom.net

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2540541 or 021 489088
arthursobey@yahoo.ie

SALMON AND TROUT SEASON WELL UNDERWAY

FISSTA acknowledge the strong support

we receive from this magazine team who do everything possible and more to ensure our work and promotions are carried out to the best of our ability. The support we receive allows us to undertake the strong lobbying and work programme and is one of the main reasons why we still have some angling both north and south of this island. The announcement that our sister angling colleagues in the UK have been forced to pull out of the CLA game fair confirms how a professionally well run programme of events such as the Great Game Fairs of Ireland can promote us and breathe new life into our Federations who need the publicity for our outdoor sports. We ask our members to please support this magazine and attend such Great Game Fairs held in Shanes Castle and Birr.

The season is now well underway as many FISSTA angler members report on the outcomes from the various Fishery District Committees where again the salmon surplus is divided up between draft nets and anglers. It is difficult to sit at such meetings as I have done in Donegal and listen to the various reports of dwindling numbers of salmon in rivers that are on life support and hear how draft netting representative seek increased allocations of fish.

It is a very difficult task to argue for the salmon if the managers and conservators fail to protect the fish from the many threats that are wiping them out. We have to convince the very politicians that are charged with their protection to act fast before it is too late. Electioneering may have just finished up north and we look forward to a new broom that will much improve the lot of the angler and our salmon and trout species. Scotland is of particular concern as the new figures indicate alarming decline in numbers while salmon cages and sealice take their toll on the wild migrating smolts heading to sea.

The burning worry for us as we head into election mode in the south, is of our great fear that the ten mega sea cage plan will be announced in the coming month as pressure builds up from the international salmon farmers to give them what they want now.

FISSTA have lobbied hard along with our many support groups and members to get the Government to do nothing and so far we have managed this but we are told that a decision is now imminent as Norwegian Marine Harvest promise even more jobs than offered before to Minister Coveney.

That is why FISSTA have dug deep to legally challenge the Minister on the grounds of bias and he has now been served this FISSTA legal notice to prevent him from proceeding to issue licences to the current application BIM has lodged for the 75 cages off Inis Oirr in Galway Bay. The initial response from Government circles has been measured but some Ministers failed to conceal their anger at our strongest attack yet on a Government policy that will eventually wipe out our wild salmon and seatrout. The hard lobbying work of Labour Party TD Michael McNamara from County Clare has really made a difference as an 'anti salmon cages' motion was passed at their party conference in Killarney in late February. This has major implications for Government as the Labour Party support is now withdrawn leaving Fine Gael salmon farm policy in tatters.

FISSTA CONTINUE FIGHT AGAINST SEA CAGE POLICY AS CHAIRMAN SERVES LEGAL NOTICE TO MINISTER

FISSTA continue to campaign for the wild Atlantic salmon to return to abundance in our Irish rivers and confront the issues that impede this progress such as pollution from salmon cages in the open sea or estuaries. We work to support clean water for the enhancement of our salmonid habitat for the sport of angling and oppose the imposition of salmon cages and especially the ten mega fish farms planned by Minister Coveney, the first to be located in Galway Bay as applied for by BIM back in December 2012.

Chairman Paul Lawton states: "FISSTA are very concerned that our government have failed to protect our wild salmon resource to date and judging by the Marine Harvest meetings and minutes we have observed to date we fear that the Minister for Agriculture, Food and Marine will sacrifice our wild salmon stocks in exchange for open net salmon cages that will ruin the remainder of our salmon and seatrout." FISSTA believe the minutes give the impression of the Government as willing to facilitate Marine Harvest's requests, and in effect, being an agent for the company and its business interests in the State. The appointment of Minister of State Joe McHugh TD in July 2014 confirms that Marine Harvest's proposals as recorded in the 29th January 2014 minutes could be interpreted as the government implementing them while proposals from



FISSTA Chairman Paul Lawton serves legal notice on Minister Simon Coveney.

FISSTA to end the licensing of open net sea cages from FISSTA fall yet again on the deaf ears.

Ireland Wild Atlantic coastline is most unsuitable for such an industry as the offshore farms are particularly problematic given that the widespread pollution and sea lice emanating from the cages have little or no availability of freshwater to treat such diseases as AGD. There is continuous danger of mass escapes such as the 250,000 salmon disaster last year in Bantry Bay which no compensation has been paid to the victims for their massive losses to date. Contained farms and on shore farms are the future of the industry and FISSTA have lobbied for the farms be moved out of the estuaries on to the land and the framework to do that has to be put in place.

The minutes obtained by FISSTA under a Dail PQ request relate to a meeting which took place on January 29th 2014 in Government Buildings between the Taoiseach, Minister Coveney, and senior personnel from the Taoiseach's department and the Department of Agriculture, with Marine Harvest CEO Alf-Helge Årskog and other high ranking members of the company. The minutes have sent alarm bells ringing among anglers, environmentalists, some sections of the scientific community, and many TDs and councillors who oppose An Bord Iascaigh Mhara's contentious proposal to construct a 1,126 acre, 15,000 tonne, open sea caged

salmon fish farm off Inis Oírr.

Serious questions about Government impartiality and independence over controversial plans to construct a massive salmon farm off Inis Oírr have been raised following the emergence of minutes from a meeting between the Taoiseach and a fish farm industry giant.

FISSTA are also worried by the request, made at the meeting by Marine Harvest, that the industry needs 'a champion' to take a developmental role (as distinct from the regulatory role) to drive forward the interests of the industry and to coordinate interactions with the EU Commission and Inland Fisheries Ireland. The company felt there should be 'one voice' communicating with the Commission from Ireland about the industry.

Chairman Paul Lawton concluded by stating: "Such meetings illustrate that the Government may not be impartial on the issue and appears to have made up its mind to give the go-ahead, despite the serious scientific and environmental questions which have been raised about the effects of such farms on wild salmon stocks. That is why we in FISSTA serve notice of legal action now on Minister Coveney to cease all considerations and actions to approve this application in Galway Bay immediately."

FISSTA have failed as yet to convince Minister Coveney to scrap his and BIM's ten mega fish farms plan first announced in 2011. Our campaign titled 'IRELAND AGAINST

SALMON CAGES' continues to gain momentum while the FISSTA founded local pressure group called Galway Bay Against Salmon Cages have done Trojan work winning the hearts and minds of both politicians and the general public. The intense pace of our sustained campaign over the past three and a half years consisting of five major protest marches in Carrigaline, (Minister Coveney's office), Castlebar (Taoiseach's office), Dublin (BIM Aviva Conference), Shelbourne Hotel (Good Food Irl awards). By far the most successful with over 2,500 turning out on the day took place in Galway City where our true and loyal friend to the wild salmon, international Goldman award winner Orri Vigfusson was the keynote speaker.

FISSTA have held meetings with An Taoiseach, Minister Simon Coveney TD, ministers and several key civil servants in our campaign to stop sealiced fish farms infesting our migrating smolts, but under Freedom of Information answers we now know so too are Marine Harvest who we understand are very active seeking new licences starting with a

mega 15,000 ton one with over 70 cages near Inis Oirr in Galway Bay. FISSTA appeal for support to help with our Plan A, B, and C to save our wild Atlantic salmon and seatrout.

SUMMARY OF LEGAL NOTICE SUBMISSION TO MINISTER COVENEY

FISSTA, the Federation of Irish Salmon and Seatrout Anglers, represent over 20,000 members in over 90 clubs on every major salmon river on the island of Ireland and are managed by the National Executive Council who are nominated and elected to serve for one year at their November AGM. FISSTA are accredited Non-Government Observers to NASCO, (North Atlantic Salmon Conservation Organisation) comprising of the nineteen Atlantic salmon states forum of NASCO that continuously monitors the dramatic decline of our wild Atlantic salmon. Furthermore, we are founding members of both RISE – Rural Ireland Says Enough and the most recently formed Coalition of Irish Sports with representation of over 200,000 outdoor nature

sports people who are determined to protect and defend their country sports from all threats.

On 8th June 2011 FISSTA marked World Oceans Day with a meeting in Leinster House with Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources Mr. Pat Rabbitte TD. I had on behalf of my federation attended the NASCO conference in Greenland the previous week where the local salmon netmen gave all accredited NGO's the clear message to warn our nineteen salmon governments to cease all netting exploitation and end sealice damage to our shared wild salmon resource. Minister Rabbitte was told by our President Josephine Egan of these concerns (and threat to fish out the salmon in their feeding grounds) expressed by the Greenland fishermen and also our concerns to the then recent press reports for the establishment of new infrastructure to accommodate ten mega salmon farm plans to be located outside the Natura 2000 protected sites. We drew Minister Rabbitte's attention to these plans promoted by you and sought his support and intervention to protect the wild salmonid resource under his responsibility.


We left Leinster House satisfied and assured this would be done urgently. Your keynote address at the Oceans 2012 event in Trinity College Long Room suggested that your scientific advice was that the ten mega farms would be free from any interference with our wild salmon and seatrout and we were asked to reserve judgement until the Environmental Impact Statement was published. Sadly, the EIS published in September 2012 raised more fears and questions which triggered our this very long Ireland Against Salmon Cages campaign resulting in many marches and public awareness events in cooperation with the many other organisations who later came on board. The campaign continues in various public awareness forms and in the case of FISSTA and our supporting colleagues we now tender this present notice of legal challenge which we hope will lift the impending threat thus increasing the state protection for our wild Atlantic salmon and seatrout.

Professor Ronan Gormley of UCD, in a presentation to an Italian food science conference in 2010 defined and highlighted how sustainability and ethical issues impact on our seafood sector and advocates regulation to protect stocks before it is too late. He concluded that unless the mortality at sea problem is alleviated our stocks continue to face grave danger. It may have been too early in 2010 to conclude that one of the main reasons for the wild Atlantic salmon decline was the continued infestation on the wild migrating smolts from sea lice emanating from the fish farm cages but not anymore as IFI

***Federation of Irish Salmon
& Sea Trout Anglers***

Conaidhm na Slat Iascairí Bradáin agus Breac Geal

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

NOTICE OF LEGAL ACTION TO MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE, FOOD AND MARINE MR. SIMON COVENEY TD. From FISSTA and DGAF

Federation of Irish Salmon & Seatrout Anglers and Donegal Game Angling Federation

Sent from the desk of Noel Carr Secretary FISSTA, Teelin Rd. Carrick, Co. Donegal
Office Tel: 00353 749730300 Email: dgl1@indigo.ie Date: 5.3.2015

For the Attention of:

- (i) An Taoiseach, Eanna O' Cionnaith, TD.
- (ii) Attorney General, Ms Marie Whelan.
- (iii) Mr. Simon Coveney TD, Minister for Agriculture, Food and Marine.
- (iv) Mr Alex White, TD, Minister for Communications, Energy & Natural Resources.
- (v) Mr. Alan Kelly, TD, Minister for Environment.
- (vi) Mrs. Heather Humphries, TD, Minister for Arts, Heritage and Gaeltacht
- (vii) Mr Paschal Donoghue, TD, Minister for Transport, Tourism & Sport.
- (viii) Mr. Michael Noonan, TD Minister for Finance
- (ix) Mr. Brendan Howlin, TD, Minister for Public Expenditure & Reform.
- (x) Dr. Leo Varadkar, TD, Minister for Health.
- (xi) Mr. Richard Bruton, TD, Minister for Enterprise and Innovation
- (xii) Tanaiste Ms. Joan Burton, Minister for Social Protection
- (xiii) Ms. Anne Phelan TD, Minister of State at the Departments of Agriculture, Food and Marine.



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scientists and others have now confirmed in the intervening period.

Licences for these cages are granted for sites in our salmon river estuaries and in this regard we are an interested party in the licensing of the above project at Inisheer, Galway Bay as we feel that the granting of a licence for a mega farm offshore of 15,000 tonnes will be detrimental to wild Atlantic salmon and wild sea trout stocks that our members wish to protect. As you stated last February in the Dail to Deputy O Cuiv TD: "I have not granted one salmon farm licence application since coming into office and I will not until I get recommendations on my desk, from the Marine Institute primarily backed up by my own Department officials, to the effect that it is appropriate to grant the licence."

We contend that such advice cannot be granted as it would be inappropriate and we back this up in our objection document of December 2012, and supported and authored by the internationally renowned environmental campaigner and scientist Dr. Roderick O'Sullivan who has been an invaluable source of assistance to us.

Rationale for legal action:

Why Minister Coveney must delegate the decision on granting of mega salmon farm licenses as state is offering a blanket guarantee to operators that it will be liable for lease losses if they develop and lease marine sites:

Dept. of Agriculture, Food and Marine (By meeting potential contractors or tenders the Minister has shown bias under Aquaculture) **Food Safety** – threat to clean food image and Origin Green brand – we cannot risk another horse meat type scandal with €500,000 farmed salmon industry in a €15bn food industry. **Rural Ireland Decline** – CEDRA highlights damage to €750m angling tourism.

Dept. of Environment, (cost to Irish Water – UISCE Eireann as new licences require large supplies of public fresh water eg RTE Ear to the Ground February 2015 where Marine Harvest admitted they are not charged for treated fresh water to date)

Dept. of Community, Heritage and Gaeltacht (extinction of wild salmon species, loss of angling jobs will damage our language)

Dept. of Transport, Tourism & Sport (Loss of invaluable recreational waters, and €750m angling tourism revenue) source TDI consultants report for IFI July 2013.

Dept. of Finance (Ten mega fish farm plan will how will this loss of jobs and revenue to our exchequer be replaced)

Dept. of Health (how will the recreational dividend of angling be replaced in a community that loses it)

Dept. of Communications, Energy & Natural Resources – defending the wild

salmon is the key role of the IFI under Minister White.

Dept. of Enterprise and Innovation – Jobs – Minister Bruton must decide if 15,000 sustainable angling tourism albeit seasonal jobs are better than the 64 unsustainable fish farming jobs (per new licence) that are dependent on the investment mood from the Oslo stock exchange.

Dept. of Social Protection (must acknowledge the drain on this department's resources if we lose 15,000 angling tourism jobs)

List of facts supplied To support FISSTA action:

FISSTA - Who We Are. Also Who Is Rise And Coalition Of Irish Sports

FISSTA National Executive Council 2015
Professor Ronal Gormley Paper To Italian Food Science 2010

Dail Exchange With Deputy O Cuiv 17.5.15

Minutes Of Marine Harvest – Govt Meeting In Leinster House – 30.1. 2014

Minutes Of Marine Harvest And Ministers Meeting In Oslo - March 2014

FISSTA Graphic Of Wild Atlantic Salmon Way – Migratory Channels For Wild Salmon Smolts Including UK And European Fish That Ireland Must Provide Safe Passage Through Irish Waters

Inshore Ireland Article – Salmon Extinction On The Cards - Feb 2015

Donegal Game Angling Federation - Legal Case In Supreme Court

Angling Federations Alliance Signed Against Fish Farming

Pesticides Damage To Inshore Wild Fisheries – Norwegian Paper

New Technology Alternatives: North Atlantic Salmon Fund & Atlantic Salmon Federation Endorsements – New Closed Containment Technology Already Developed In Canada And Norway By Marine Harvest Suitability Of The Process – Dail Exchange O Cuiv Vs. Coveney

Icelandic Salmon Conservation Groups Brings Case Against State Feb 15

Marine Institute Recommended Map Of 46 Potential Offshore Sites For Salmon Farm Production As Included In Eis Galway Bay 2012

Irish Times Report – Fish Farm Fined For Damage To Salmonid River

FISSTA Publications Against Open Cage Salmon Farming

Link To Website To Access FISSTA Objection To Bim Application & 1,200 Page Eis - December 2012

Labour Conference Motion Against Galway Bay Salmon Cages Passed on 28.2.15

Tourism Revenue To Increase As More Angling And Outdoor Sports Holidays Attract Huge Investments In Border Counties Of

Longford And Donegal

Over the space of one month we see the announcement of two new angling tourism projects that will employ over 1,500 which FISSTA welcomes as a vehicle for sustainable prosperity to very remote areas that badly need the revenue that will be spent in the local communities. FISSTA have always promoted the policy to create angling tourism jobs over the unsustainable fish farming jobs and this €150 million investment confirms that such massive investment will only come if we have a safe and clean angling environment.

FISSTA WILL BE KEY NGO LOBBYIST AT INTERNATIONAL NASCO SALMON CONFERENCE IN CANADA TO DEBATE THE IRISH SALMON FARMING ISSUE

The North Atlantic Salmon Conservation Organisation or NASCO are well aware of our national and international campaign to oppose the ten mega salmon farm plan by Minister Coveney which incidentally is the biggest programme of salmon growing in the world of which many long established producers and scientists view as marine environmental madness.

FISSTA will be key NGO speaker at international NASCO salmon conference in Canada in June where 19 salmon countries from around the Atlantic that includes Norway and Scotland as well as Ireland will debate the Irish salmon farming issue. They have constantly asked why every farmers national organisation in every one of these wild salmon countries of the nineteen oppose salmon growing in open net sea cages, EXCEPT IFA IRELAND. This is a question we all would love to resolve before it is too late. ISGA may argue that we are overestimating the sealice and AGD problem but we know Irish farmers have it within their powers to rescue the Irish and international migrating smolts from disease and certain mortality (of 39% as IFI scientists confirm) by getting ISGA and Minister Coveney to reconsider this ill thought out plan for such mega 15,000 ton farms such as Inis Oirr now being considered.

CATCH A BREAK FROM WORK STRESS BY GOING FLY FISHING

Why fly fish on the banks of the flowing river when you can sit at home and watch a small or big screen? New Zealand native, Jess Murphy 36, is the owner and head chef of the renowned Kal Restaurant in Galway City argues: "it is important that we do fun things outside of work and my new passion is fly fishing. As switch off activities go, you couldn't ask for a better way of watching the world go by" (see the full story from Life and Soul Irish Daily Mail on FISSTA)

Country Chat

Billy remembers cow conversations, works around a 'fairy thorn' but can't lay his hands on a good 'shillelagh' just when he needs one!

Ironically, as this magazine celebrates thirty years in existence, our little gun club at Seaforde celebrates thirty years as a club. It was about this time five years ago that we decided to replace the old release pen perimeter and corner posts, the latter being central to any good pheasant release pen. The corner posts were replaced in a couple of corners with the proverbial telegraph pole, obviously reduced in length, having been obtained from a member who had an old one replaced on his private premises. As with all things syndicate and club orientated, it never ceases to amaze me, as to where do all these bits and pieces come from. There will always be someone in a club who knows someone who has, or have themselves, immediate access or knowledge as to the whereabouts of mechanical aids and such, materials that would aid immensely, not to mention financially, with the task in hand. I am told that there is a scrounger in every club, but it is not quite etiquette for to ask such gifted individuals too many questions.

Staying in the same field as the pen and down in one corner, runs a long established stream. It runs from one marsh to another, the source of which, being nothing short of miraculous, as it travels underground in places, 'peters out' here and there, manifests itself around the odd field or two, and then turns up as a little stream, complete with bird life, water insects and sticklebacks. When the cousins and I were young enough to use the steam for entertainment, the sticklebacks were our main point of interest. Using an old fashioned bedspring — it was even old fashioned by the time we reached the sixties — we would tie four bits of twine to each corner, then turf it into the stream where we would leave it for a while. Grabbing all four ends of the



The Blackthorn in flower.

twine, we would pull the spring straight out, complete with all manner of wriggling creepy crawlies, including sticklebacks; it kept us amused for ages. It was that very same spot that a gullible and naive youngster ran the full length of a field after a mallard duck who was feigning a broken wing, thinking that he had come across, not an easy and out of season meal I hasten to add, but a pet that he could nurture and call his own.

When he was no more than eight or nine-years-old, my late brother Sammy would perch himself on top of a little wrought iron gate, which was situated at the very same spot at the stream, and hold a weekly audience with a field full of little Aberdeen Angus heifers. Kitted out in a pair of shorts and the standard issue gumboots for all country children of that era, the younger brother would innocently waffle away to them, his little bare legs dangling over the gate. They in turn, with their big brown eyes, long eyelashes, and cute little hair-dos (no two the same) would jostle back and forth for a front row stand, then having established as to who stood where, they would settle down to listen intently to the sound of the child's

voice. When he finished, the youngster would jump down and head off home to get his tea. The little heifers in turn, would stand about in twos and threes like parishioners outside a church on a Sunday morning after a sermon.

Anyway, back to the release pen, the pen consists mainly of blackthorn, hawthorn, elder, gorse, and bramble, with a lump of rock about midway down the pen. Steven and myself put a shelter up inside the pen which I am certain has saved many a poult during the worst of bad weather. The pen is run along the lines of what I would term as 'conventional means' of a release system, that's to say the birds are free to come and go, with pop-holes strategically placed to allow them access back to the safety of the pen. With enough overhead cover to protect them from aerial attack and someone being in attendance at first light when they flutter off the bushes, especially in the early days, not only to protect them from predators but to ensure that they are using the pop-holes, it is some form of reassurance that all's well, at least for that morning anyhow. Most of the losses are usually with the onslaught of torrential downpours at the worst

possible time when they first arrive and are still bunched, or later on when they put their running shoes on and start roaming further afield.

Locally it was called the 'Fairy Hill'

When renewing the uprights there was a huge debate as to who was going to cut down a blackthorn sapling that was causing concern and for no other reason than it was jeopardising the straight run of the pen on one side. No one wanted to cut it down, as it was deemed bad luck to do so, not only for the one with saw in hand, but it could well spread to onlookers who may well be cursed as accomplices. I should point out of course, that the clump of shrubs and trees that the pen surrounds, is named locally as the Fairy Hill, which had been a playground for me and others since childhood. I have no idea who or what gave it that name, but ever since I could walk and talk, (although I am not certain in which order I developed these skills) the place has always been known as the Fairy Hill. Anyhow, the shoot captain put in an appearance to ascertain what all the shouting was about, and in true King Solomon fashion, it was decided that it would be a more sensible approach, if we just 'went around it.'

Blackthorn is a deciduous shrub, and one of the best protected against grazing animals: it positively bristles with stiff, spiny thorns on the twigs, branches and even the stem. It rarely grows taller than thirteen feet, which would be close to the mature blackthorn shrub that we have in the pen and because it needs plenty of light, it thrives best on the edges of woods, clearings, embankments, etc. It is perhaps not surprising that many birds chose the spiny fortress for nesting, the little cup-shaped nests usually only obvious after the shrub has shed its foliage. The blackthorn's tight prickly growth would seem to make it an ideal hedging plant for creating stock-proof barriers, as indeed it is, but there is one drawback: the blackthorn sends up erect



Billy and his younger brother Sammy in the 1960s

shoots or suckers from its roots, often several feet from the main stem, and if these are not cut back they gradually spread out into the neighbouring pasture. A dense thicket can be formed which is difficult to remove. A large clump of blackthorns can result from just one plant spreading. We have evidence of this in several places about the club ground, especially in areas which are fenced in as set aside, and in places not being cultivated regularly.

Joe Bloggs sloe gin

The blackthorn flowers early, in March or April, even before the foliage appears in May. Each flower is composed of five pure white petals and in some years the blossoms cover the twigs in such profusion that you can hardly see the bark. The flowers are succeeded by hard green fruits which ripen and swell during summer to become the familiar small, round blackish plums called sloes. The black skin is usually coated with a dusty bloom which is what gives them the bluish-grey colour. Now as we all know, sloes can be used with sugar and steeped in gin to produce sloe gin, an excellent liqueur-type drink, and contrary to those who know me, I personally prefer the manufactured

stuff. The 'Joe Bloggs' stuff has either too much of one thing or lacking in something else.

Back in January, LB and I set aside a day to walk the hedges with the little cocker spaniels. He has the mum and I have her two daughters, which kind of reduces the banter on which is the best. We started the day off with an enjoyable mini breakfast at LB's before we left and were even blessed with a little fall of snow, befitting the occasion. However, as we neared our stop-off point, LB asked if I had brought the sloe gin. "No, I thought you said you were bringing it," I replied. Now then, it would not have mattered a jot if we had forgotten the dogs, the game-bags, ammo or gun, but to forget the sloe gin, was inexcusable. Later on, as we walked either side of the hedge, the war of words and accusations continued. "You told me last night that you were bringing the sloe gin," I shouted over the hedge. Up ahead, pheasants were legging it, head and shoulders down in true characteristic fashion."But you said that you would bring a bottle too," piped back LB in his defence. Why is it, I hear myself asking, when you're looking for one, there is never a good blackthorn 'shillelagh' to hand?

Fishing crazy or just a coincidence?



Tiny streams to international tournaments and the Hemingway Cup and coincidences along the way.

If at all possible at all possible I act on any opportunities that come my way and recently, as I approached my sixtieth birthday, I was given this opportunity to review my love of fishing and where it's taken me to date. My late mother always said I would fish in a puddle! Not quite, but I would if I thought it contained fish.

I have fished for as long as I can

remember. As a child I fished with my father on the Antrim coast and the little streams and lakes of Donegal or Connemara on our annual holiday. I started early and was quickly obsessed. My dad didn't fly fish, but I had an Uncle Ernie who not only did, but tied flies and at around the age of ten in 1965 we began.

That season I got a Milbro Truefly

rod, and an Intrepid reel with line for Christmas. We both joined Banbridge Angling Club and, under my uncle's tutelage, I tied my first fly. I was well and truly hooked! Next year I will be 50 years in that club. Later when I went to grammar school, I fished with my new angling friend John Todd up and down the Bann, Lagan and Ravarnett. In Winter we tortured John's big sister to drive us in her yellow Daf automatic to fish for pike and perch amongst the myriad drumlin lakes of County Down.

When I joined the ranks of the Department of Agriculture, I soon discovered that they had angling societies. They also had competitions and the selected teams got not only paid trips, but the opportunity to represent the NI Civil Service, against folk from England, Wales and Scotland. I made the teams for Trout flyfishing, shore and boat sea fishing. I failed to make the coarse team but three out of four wasn't bad? Life was good.

As time progressed I married and also left the Civil Service to start a little photographic business. I had several



Acrobatic striped marlin.



A bonefish from the Seychelles.

years where my main fishing addiction revolved around chasing water levels on the salmon and sea-trout rivers down to the west of Ireland. I thought nothing of driving to the Cork Blackwater, or the Moy at Ballina, just on a forecast of imminent rain. But, as the responsibilities of business and home took root, this was no longer possible as I was now totally managed by my diary and the needs of my increasing customers. I needed a fishing coincidence to happen!

We had been mugged by a gang of barracuda

Marion (my wife who had joined me as partner in the expanding empire) and I found that some times of year we could fit in a holiday. Early trips to the Mediterranean were great for food, wine and sun, but the fishing was poor to say the least. But on a trip to the Caribbean Island of Grenada, I got my chance to fish. The trip was what is euphemistically known as a six pack. Charter costs are split between six complete strangers from different hotels each drawing a strike number. On most of these trips you pay and never get to touch a fishing rod but this time I got lucky. I drew strike three and very early in the trip two of the trolling reels began to sing. We had been mugged by a gang of barracuda and although most game anglers see them as 'trash fish,' on this trip they counted and I was in

the chair! Suddenly through my Boots Polaroid glasses I saw what appeared to be a black stick pop up behind a lure. I then could see a huge fin come clear of the water and the dark fish suddenly lit up like the Blackpool illuminations. In truth I could not say I caught that little Atlantic sailfish, for the deckhand hooked it and handed me the rod, as is normal on tourist charters, but it was my very first billfish and I was hooked yet again.

I realise now, over twenty years later, that catching the sailfish was nothing short of blind chance. I was in Grenada as it was inexpensive after the American invasion to oust a left wing Dictatorship. Perhaps only folk from Northern Ireland might see this as opportunity, but by chance I went with

True Blue Charters and later learnt that Captain Gary Clifford was one of the Island's top skippers, but above all I was there at the correct season.

At Christmas that year we holidayed in the Far East, and booking with Kuoni, I asked if there were any marlin fishing charters available in Sabah Northern Borneo. I was referred to their new Angling Consultant and given his telephone number. It turned out that he was Peter Petzer, newly arrived from his native South Africa to set up Worldwide Fishing Safaris in the UK. He was very straight with me, he knew nothing of the area except that its geographical location would suggest an undeveloped Black Marlin Fishery. Furthermore, he asked that if I found boats and fishing, would I let him know and send him pictures. I did get fishing, raising some marlin which failed to bite, but caught lots of other game species. I sent the pictures!

Remember at the start, I mentioned opportunity and coincidence, well, two months later Peter asked if I could represent him in Venezuela to fish and photograph La Guira the famous marlin fishery, close to Caracas. I went all expenses paid as a guest of the Venezuelan Tourist Board and not only did I catch several sailfish and white marlin, I accompanied a famous American saltwater fly angler who coached me to catch a white marlin on a fly rod.



Dalriada was the only boat in Mexico with a Belfast home port.



Making use of the circle hook.



The Hemingway Cup, Havana, Cuba.

Soon after travelling on Peter's recommendation to Tobago, I was accompanied by Richard Johnson and Robert Buick, both now lifelong friends. We fished an old converted commercial Trinidadian wooden single engined boat called Hard Play. Its owner and captain was Gerard De Silva or Frothy to those who knew him. We were met at the tiny airport by Teija his Scandinavian wife and their first little son Adrian. Hospitality was good but we were immediately concerned by Frothy's seemingly laid back demeanour, but it turned out he was a retired world class surfer and above all the man was a fishing machine. The

next year we fished the Tobago Billfish Tournament with him and between Richard and myself we won every class. I even caught, tagged and released my first blue marlin. It turned out also that Frothy was a keen fly fisherman having caught the bug travelling to Sweden to visit his in-laws. I also caught my first tarpon, bonefish, permit and tuna on fly later that week after the party.

Over the next few years, I travelled extensively with World Wide Fishing Safaris as both a client and a working photographer. I helped make television programmes with them and made exploratory trips to Cuba,

Guatemala, and even the Xingu an Amazon tributary. I caught and tagged all of the available nine IGFA recognised billfish species, including five species on the fly rod. I even got a little obsessed with the history of billfish angling after visiting Russell, a small town in North Island, New Zealand.

The town was a fishing legend, as the early billfish pioneer Zane Grey set up camp there to fish the Bay of Islands. Once more coincidence paid a part. On a one day stop over in Auckland, I spotted a poster in a sports shop window advertising the Inaugural Air New Zealand Salt Fly Tournament. In the fishing department I met John Giacon, a retired builder and fly fishing fanatic. He asked if I would organise a Northern Ireland Team to fish it and with flight assistance from Air New Zealand; I said yes. Enter Richard and Robert again! I will never forget the first year: the great and the good of salt water fly fishing attended. Australian teams, American teams, Japanese and South African teams with famous names I had seen in the magazines who were there to report. Well, we didn't win but we didn't disgrace ourselves either and got in some spectacular trout fishing while there. We returned four more years and am proud to say we won it twice.

Another set of coincidences came out of the Cuban trip. While there with Peter, we discovered not only that the oldest Marlin Cup - the Hemingway - was still fished, but it had evolved into a very fair release IGFA ratified tournament. American teams, although not allowed to stay off their boats or spend money when in Havana, had won all but once since the revolution. On that occasion, it had been won by a team captained by Che Guevara.

We discovered the oldest Marlin Cup - the Hemingway - was still fished

I planned to be the next non-American to win it and using my



Potential 16 lb world record rooster fish.



Approximately 250 Kg black marlin, Kenya.



A tagged striped marlin at the boat.

fishing contacts made while last fishing in Havana we made a plan. We brought in Frothy whom Pete and I reckoned as the best Tournament Marlin man in the Caribbean - and we won! That win brought me to Cabo san Lucas, Mexico to represent Cuba in the IGFA World Offshore Final, introducing Marion and myself to the greatest fishing town on the Planet. I loved the town so much that when I sold my company and retired we bought a house and brought a boat down from California. I had to win IGFA rules tournaments to fish in a finals team and over the next few years I got not only to represent Cuba, but also Mauritius and Kenya twice.

Circumstances changed and family illness brought me home full time to Ireland, but I enjoyed Mexico. We ran Dalriada, a Grady White (the only boat in Mexico with a Belfast Home Port) for four seasons, putting an incredible 3000 hours on her Yamahas including around 250 days bill fishing. Even more incredibly we averaged 3.8 billfish a day, ratified by tagging and the Billfish Foundation, releasing just short of a thousand fish with more than 700 tagged. Needless to say Richard and Robert came to help, as did many other good friends. I have always taken my chances and believed in using the power of the 'coincidence' to experience new, exciting things and it seems to have worked for me over the years.

World Wide Fishing Safaris became a victim of the internet age and direct booking but True Blue Charters still fishes with Gary www.yesaye.com Baby Adrian has grown up a top class surfer and fisherman and works with his dad Frothy as a qualified captain. From October to May they fish a small fleet of boats in Tobago and are found at www.hardplay.net They have also a boat in Madeira having restored the famous boat Pesca Grossa and fish charters there from June to late September. www.madeiragrandermarlin.com Tight lines!



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By Betty Hayes

The Media Fly Fishing Challenge at Annamoe

The event is not really meant to be a challenge, but a very enjoyable social outing where a group of reporters, journalists and writers come together to fish, tell stories and try to win a 'friendly' competition. Yesterday's event was a challenge to me having only one Rainbow to my name by close of play (last cast) at 5pm. However, the old saying rings true, every day spent fishing is a great day and sometimes you even catch fish.



(l to r) Derek Evans, Brian Nally: Maurice Neill, Declan Cahill, Bobby Kerr, Fergal Keane, Larry Nixon, Dick Warner, Paddy O'Flaherty, Betty Hayes, Liam Kane, Mick Flanagan, Derek Davis, Josie Mahon.

Our leader and organiser of these outings is Derek Evans, angling correspondent for the Irish Times. We all try to promote quality venues and to make readers aware of the excellent fishing available in Ireland. On 10th April we fished Annamoe Trout Fishery at the invitation of owner Brian Nally.

The lake is stocked with healthy, lively, hard fighting rainbows to 3lbs+ but from some of the takes we saw, I believe there are trout of 10lb and bigger in there. The fish were down but I saw quite a few rises and in fact I landed a fish on a size 12 buzzer. Most successful patterns were black, white or green marabou lures, however, as with



Maurice Neill, 'top rod,' with a fine rainbow trout.



Dick Warner bringing a fish to the net.

any good catch and release fishery the Annamoe rainbows are not stupid but well educated. They didn't give themselves up easily!

We numbered twelve and after a welcoming coffee and biscuits we were each given a match card. The lake was divided into four beats, each angler fished for a half hour on a designated stretch before moving on to the next, covering all four beats before lunch. There was plenty of good natured banter and loud cheering when someone was 'in.' The fish were measured and photographed, then quickly and carefully returned to the water.

Brian had prepared a delicious hot meal at lunchtime and following a good rest, more tea or coffee and plenty of chat it was time for the second round i.e. a repeat of the morning session. The

afternoon turned cold with a north easterly wind blowing, making casting less comfortable. Paddy O'Flaherty (BBC Northern Ireland) was bringing in lots of fish, and I believe he was fishing a sinking line. Fergal Keane (RTE) who was my fishing neighbour, also changed to a sinking line. He was fishing very deep and but without his earlier success rate. We found that setting the hook was very difficult with this method. However he had already caught six fish to get him into the prizes.

Dick Warner (film maker, broadcaster, journalist, and reporter for Irish Examiner) and a good friend was probably the most relaxed. He carried no baggage, but had a small selection of 'killer flies' in a box the size of a cigarette package in his waistcoat pocket. He got down to the water's edge to land all seven of his fish, then

took a break. That's the kind of rainbow fisher I could aspire to be (but I would like to see inside that little fly box).

A very cheerful and philosophical Derek Davis, (TV personality and broadcaster) also took advantage of the shoreline seating to take a break which did not cramp his angling style, as one of his five trout was the biggest fish of the day at 51cms.

The prizewinners

Three of the first four prize winners came from Northern Ireland. In first place, Maurice Neill, (Belfast Telegraph); second, Paddy O'Flaherty; and fourth place, Larry Nixon. Third with eight fish was Mick Flanagan ("Midland Angling", guide and angling correspondent for The Sunday World), Mick is a very popular member of the group. Liam Kane (Irish Anglers Digest) is also very popular, always good humoured and helpful. Liam returned at least four fish. Bobby Kerr (broadcaster and business reporter for Newstalk) was disadvantaged as he only fished for a couple of hours in the afternoon but he was a major contributor to the atmosphere of comradery and good cheer.

The fishery is situated in the heart of County Wicklow close to Laragh and Glendalough and in the valley of the Wicklow Mountains. Driving to Annamoe yesterday morning from County Kildare, crossing the Kings River, then over the Wicklow Gap in the bright morning sunshine, I was reminded that we have some of the



Mick Flanagan who came third and another good Annamoe rainbow.



Paddy O'Flaherty came from Belfast for the event.

most beautiful and spectacular scenery in the world.

Well designed fishery

Annamoe Trout Fishery is a picturesque lake set in about four acres of woodland beside the banks of the Avonmore River. The venue is well designed with thoughtfully placed timber benches along the banks, tempting the angler to 'take five' and appreciate the surroundings. I did this very thing and became aware of the variety and pitch of the birds' chorus in the nearby forest. There is a comfortable cabin/lodge where Brian can provide tea and coffee, soup and other refreshments from 10am until dusk with outside seating for al fresco dining on sunny days. There is also a bait-fishing pond for juveniles: I have yet to see any child who didn't enjoy catching their first fish, it beats the playground hands down. You can book a family day out, rod hire and bait is available. Besides individual anglers and families, corporate groups, club outings and charity events are also catered for. Wild brown trout fishing would be available on the river in season.

Our event was most enjoyable and, as reporters and journalists, we hope to encourage everyone to go fishing. The fish for topping up the stock in the lake were supplied by ADAS Trout Limited. Brian was assisted by Des Chew and Josie Mahon from Inland Fisheries Ireland. Des took the photographs which are featured in this story, and was handy with the landing net and measure when called upon. He was also the whistle blower, for time up, change beat etc. and the dinner gong! Josie Mahon helped with the score cards and weigh-in. In all eleven anglers caught 63 fish. For more information about the fishery contact Brian Nally, Trout Fishing at Annamoe, Co. Wicklow.

Phone: 0404-45470.

Email:

annamoefishery@eircom.net

Website:

annamoetroutfishery.com



Liam Kane got down to business early.



Fergal Keane's net was busy all day even when he hooked an occasional tree.



No camera nearby to record Derek Davis's biggest and winning fish compared to which, this one in the official measure, was a 'pinkeen'.

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IRISH MAYFLY DAYS

Spent Gnat angling in a fiery Sheelin sunset.

The atmosphere in Oughterard, along the shores of the Corrib at Mayfly time will never leave us. On such a night, on an Irish limestone lough, there's nowhere else I'd rather be.

The sweet scents of the Whitethorn are intermingling with the coconut of the gorse and the unforgettable aroma of steak and sausages being cooked on a griddle over an open fire. Though my eyes are closed my senses are alert to everything going on around me and I can hear the banter and bustling of my fellow anglers and the constant buzz of the bees and myriad insects that inhabit this rich and unique environment. The water laps gently against the shore, making curious little noises as it fills the gnarled crevices of heavily eroded limestone with its sharp edges and rounded pockets. Even though the songbirds have already nested, they are still in full song, still marking their territories I suppose and the cuckoo is calling from an adjacent island as she goes about her mischief loading huge chicks on the tiny warblers.

I'm just taking a little time out to relax for a while, a bit subdued after the previous evening's festivities in the bar. A great night it was, as usual. There is a certain excitement for an angler in Ireland at this time of year; the air is heavy with a heady expectation,

nothing that can be explained fully by mere words but an atmosphere that you can almost taste and smell; a feeling that the countryside has awakened from winters slumbers and as we near the summer solstice the generous hand of Mother Earth is unveiling nature's bounty to those who have survived the dark days. All around Ireland's famous limestone loughs fishermen are

gathering to pay homage to the most important angling event of the year, the Mayfly Festival.

We look forward to the event from one year to another, it sustains us through the long, dark winter and when it eventually happens we never feel disappointed, because if weather conditions are poor for fishing then there is always the local snug and there



A Mayfly Dun shelters beneath Hawthorne leaves.



The Honourable The Irish Society

Lower Bann Fishing: still going strong

The Honourable The Irish Society is a charity that owns and manages the game and coarse fishing in the 38 miles of the Lower Bann and neighbouring rivers. We offer premium salmon and trout fishing on private and non-private beats, together with competition-standard coarse fishing, all at a variety of prices to suit every taste.



Our team of private water bailiffs patrols the river daily for the good of everyone, and all our angling income is reinvested into protecting and managing the fisheries.

Carnroe saw 227 salmon taken and safely released alive in 2014, despite difficult weather conditions.

Lower Bann private salmon angling beats with availability for season and day rods are:

Carnroe (pictured), Culiff Rock, Movanager and Portna. Register your interest with us NOW before syndicates are fully formed for the season.

Game and Coarse permits from as little as £10 per day are available for other

parts of the Lower Bann, including the beautiful Estuary.

Day rods are also available on the following rivers: Agivey, Macosquin, Ballymoney, Clady, Moyola, Roe, Faughan, Ballinderry, Dennett, Derg.

Salmon angling on the Lower Bann opens from 4th May, and will be 'Catch & Release' only, in order to help preserve fish stocks. Fly, Spinning (no trebles, and barbless hooks only), prawn and shrimp methods all permitted. Prices remain unchanged from last season.

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An immaculate Mayfly Spinner (Spent Gnat) lays her eggs and dies

are almost as many epic nights in the pub as there are on the lough! This is an opportunity to share information, discuss tactics and fly patterns, or more importantly, renew old acquaintances and make new ones. Whether availing of the 'Black Stuff' or the 'Mountain Dew,' there is always a great camaraderie, a fellowship between brother anglers and it's great to hear tales of escapades of other anglers - the one that got away or the fantastic bounty of the loughs of yesteryear; and always a nod to those who now fish Celestial shores and whilst absent in body are undoubtedly present in spirit.

We anglers in Ireland are blessed with a plethora of fantastic loughs from which to choose, iconic game fishing locations which are known to generations of anglers, each with its own trysts and follies, each with its own distinctive character, fly patterns and traditions. The Mayfly Festival has produced a unique culture of fly tying skills, dapping, boat handling and watercraft, knowledge of the drifts in the various loughs in all their myriad moods, this is a culture whose secrets are passed down the generations from father to son, it forms part of the rich tapestry of Irish angling traditions. Is it any wonder that anglers from all corners of the world descend on Ireland at this time of year and with our new conservation ethos, habitat

improvement, catch-photograph-release, pollution control and the realisation that we have such a fantastic resource for sport, tourism, employment and the economy in rural Ireland, things can only improve for these unique fisheries.

One thing that all the limestone loughs have in common is an incredible bounty of food for trout which produces huge specimens every year, fantastic brown trout, the thought of which sets the pulse of any true angler racing. This bounty is not restricted to trout however and it is the huge variety of insects, birds, plants etc, the astounding biodiversity that makes these unique habitats such a special place to visit, especially at this time of year, and the beauty of these locations can be best described as stunning or breathtaking. Truly these are our national heritage and should be protected and nurtured as our anglers strive to do.

It was a Belfast man living in England who first introduced my brother and me to the great limestone loughs; the draw of Lough Corrib called him back year after year and, as he was a great friend of the family, he invited us down to stay at Lal Faherty's guesthouse near the Galway village of Oughterard. Alan Woodside opened the door to a whole new world for us, a world which we had only read about in the old yellow paged editions of Creel and Trout & Salmon that resided in the

dusty corners of the attic, a world which we never really expected to see but which now was a reality and for two boys in their very early teens was a paradise waiting to be explored. Not only was Lal's Lakeland Angling Centre in a superb lakeside location but he had some very knowledgeable guests such as Peter O'Reilly and Iltyd Griffiths who shared their knowledge freely, as did Lal and his brother Michael who knew every stone in the Lough.

A good wave and warm, overcast conditions

Alan loved nothing more than to drift the Lough pulling the wet flies, usually very effectively, from the sandy bay of Portacarron to the rocky reefs of the Long Shallow and he was the first person I saw to use the new material 'twinkle' in his flies. I believe he purchased it in Hatton's fishing shop in Hereford, before it was even available in Ireland. I'll never forget the first time he used it; he'd tied some twinkle into the bronze mallard wings of his lovely traditional wet mayfly patterns and we started fishing up alongside Rabbit Island in a good wave and warm, overcast conditions, low cloud over a rolling wave, perfect wet fly weather with the fly hatching and being pushed along the side of the island, concentrating them on the downwind side and we knew the fish would be mopping them up in the rolling waves.

Generous as ever, Alan had elected to take the oars and let my Dad and his best friend Billy Lapping do the fishing while Philip and I followed behind. As we drifted the side of the island we began to see the odd trout moving and caught a few smaller ones, but as Alan's boat passed the bottom of the island we saw Billy's rod draw up in a taught hoop and the line peel off his reel. Alan had to be quickly pulling against the waves as the line kited upwind and the battle began amidst the swell as the large trout made for open water. Eventually the trout was netted, over



Catch-photo-release - this beautiful trout is obviously making the best of the Mayfly bounty.



5lbs of immaculate Lough Corrib wild brown trout on Billy's first drift of an Irish lake and on Alan's new fly. As can be expected that fish was toasted several times in the bar that evening and the demand for Alan's flies grew as the news spread! We spent many happy years on Lough Corrib with Alan Woodside, Lal and Michael Faherty before moving on to discover Erne, Sheelin, Arrow, Mask etc. The buzz and atmosphere in the village of Oughterard and along the shores and islands of the Corrib at Mayfly time will never leave us; the hospitality, the fellowship and friendliness of everyone will stay with us forever and the great memories will never fade even though it's now thirty and more years ago now.....

The roar of the water boiling on the old blackened Kelly Kettle soon brings me back from my dozing and the boys have the steaks and sausages ready with great slabs of fresh bread and salty butter. A cup of hot, strong tea, tinged with the taste of the wood smoke, and a steak buttie are enough to revive the spirits of the most tired souls! During our extended lunch the mayfly are hatching from the huge expanse of the lake and are making their way to the shore including the island on which we now sit and flying up into the trees they rest, protected on the underside of the leaves. There the duns or greenfly will moult into the mature adult fly which has an immaculate white body and transparent wings and at this stage they

are ready for weather conditions to come right for the grand finale of the Mayfly Festival, the Fall of the Spent Gnat.

There is a strange timelessness about these Irish Loughs and you can't help but relax and fall into a different rhythm from the frantic pace and stress of modern day living. You can take the time to observe the beauty of what is going on around you, whether it is the antics of the baby waterfowl, the colours of the dragonflies, the soaring hawk or the ever changing moods of the Lough as different weather patterns sweep over. There is a time for reflection; a thought of days gone by and of colleagues who are no longer with us; sometimes when we are gathered on the island for lunch I imagine they are still present and as the smoke drifts up through the trees and the banter and laughter rings out from the shore, I know that there's no place where I'd rather be.

The wind has dropped and the sun appears through the clouds, the temperature rises and, as noon slips towards evening, the Mayflies once again take to the air, this time for the final time. They begin to rise, first in ones and twos, then in dozens and finally in clouds and over our heads they rise and fall in an incredible column of thousands of Mayfly all doing the undulating courtship dance. These are all male flies and soon the females start to join them; suddenly the female will be surrounded by several suitors, one of which will be successful, then she will part company and if conditions are still calm and warm then she will begin her final journey out over the Lough to lay her eggs and finally die. This incredible spectacle unfolds before our eyes and no matter how many times we've seen it, it never ceases to amaze, a complete cycle, another miracle of nature.

Suddenly they appear from the waters which have been barren all day

Now the scene is set for an evening

fishing the famous Spent Gnat, the Mayflies are laying their eggs over the water and then they lie struggling in their final death throes. This is the signal that the trout have been waiting for and they suddenly appear from the waters which have been barren all day. A huge bounty now lies on the surface of the water, no need to chase or follow, just lying static in the surface film. This bounty is well known to the lakes inhabitants and though normally too shy to come to the surface, this feast is too good to ignore. Down below, great trout are starting to stir, they have seen the Mayfly nymphs ascending, probably gorged on them early in the day, but now there is an easier meal to be had and already the smaller trout are taking advantage of this bounty and as the sun lowers in the sky the larger trout will be on the fin.

Our boats are out now, hugging little headlands and islands. A gentle breeze carries the egg-laden Mayflies out into the open expanse of water. There is little gentle ripple but here and there is a slick, a little calm lane on which the dead flies tend to concentrate and this is well known to the large trout who patrol these areas feasting leisurely on the abundant fly. Everyone is staring out intently to see if there's any movement on the surface of the water, any little sign that a fish is working the lane. Trout taking Spent Mayflies can

take very quietly with little surface disturbance, so it takes a keen eye to see them at distance although on a quiet night you can hear the slurp often before you see the rises. These fish are able to detect a boat or a clumsy drop of the oar from a long distance away, so it takes great skill to get into a casting position to cover a fish, usually anglers take turns at rowing and fishing and stalking a large trout can be tense affair as one splashy cast or noisy pull of an oar will result in the trout just melting away into the gloom.

The sun is setting now and the sky is glowing as the last rays turn the water fiery red and gold. The smaller trout are on the fin and suddenly bigger fish start to appear; their swirls moving more water and the sound of them sucking down flies much more audible. Excitement builds in the boat as a larger fish appears from downwind and starts moving up the wind lane toward us. I hold the boat just off the slick on quiet oars easing into the best position for my boat partner, my old dad, to get a good cast over it. The trout takes a few flies on one side of the slick then moves over to the other side. Although some way down the slick, we can hear him clearly as he sucks down the flies; some he just sips with little disturbance but occasionally he takes one with a huge swirl, betraying his size to us. Suddenly he is right up in front of us and dad

sends out a cast straight and true which falls gently maybe ten feet in front of the trout, dropping the fly to the far side of the slick that the fish is working. There are several flies below the artificial and the huge trout takes one, two, three, then dad's fly just disappears and after a short pause, just long enough for the fish to turn, the old man suddenly straightens up and lifts the rod high in a firm strike.

All goes taught and then suddenly the reel screams as the trout bolts away, tearing line from the reel and making for the safe depths from which he has come. Dad keeps the tension on and eventually the fish turns but soon makes another run and bores again into the inky depths. This continues for a good fifteen minutes until eventually the strain on the fish begins to tell and he starts to succumb to the pressure and comes to the surface. The strain is visible on my old man's face and I'm pretty sure I can see his knee's trembling; his hands definitely are! There is a huge golden flash beside the boat and suddenly I have him in the net, seven solid pounds of Irish gold and a memory not easily forgotten! An angler could go a lifetime waiting to catch a fish such as this on a dry fly! Quickly Dad holds him up in trembling hands for a photograph or two and then leans over the side, placing the trout gently back in the water to recover. After a several minutes the trout suddenly revives and bolts away, spraying Dad with that huge tail.

After the handshakes, I fix him a Black Bush and a cigar and we stand watching the Lough, transfixed with the beauty and the solitude in the half light of a summers evening, hearing the wildfowl in the rushes, terns on the island, hawking bats, the occasional trout, a boat engine in the distance. A long moment or two for quiet reflection before turning the boat homeward, so we can catch last orders and celebrate. As the little outboard splutters into life, I think how lucky I am to be here on such a night, Mayfly Time on an Irish Limestone Lough, there's nowhere else I'd rather be!



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RE0316	#4/6	WF6F + 50m/20lb	£79.99	£49.99
RE0318	#7/9	WF8F + 150m/20lb	£89.99	£54.99
RE0320	#9/11	WF11F + 180m/30lb	£99.99	£59.99

Spools

Code	Model	RRP	Price
RE0315	#2/4	£34.99	£25.99
RE0317	#4/6	£39.99	£25.99
RE0319	#7/9	£39.99	£27.99
RE0321	#9/11	£44.99	£29.99



HARDY SHADOW FLY ROD

The superb Shadow series of fly rods from Hardy are built on High performance, fast recovering middle to tip action blanks, delivering a refined action which reflects its intended use. So be it river, stream or lake, or anything in between, the Hardy Shadow, with its unmistakable Hardy quality throughout, is set to deliver an incredible 'Hardy' fishing experience to anglers across the globe.

- Middle to tip action, fast recovery blanks
- Lined butt guides and hard chrome single leg snake intermediates
- Translucent olive green blank finish, with silver highlights
- Section line up marks
- Full 'AAAA' grade cork handle
- Supplied in a Hardy cloth rod bag and Hardy cloth covered rod tube

Single Hand Rods

Code	Length	AFTM	Handle	Pcs	Price
HR1754	8ft	#4	RHW	4	£259.00
HR1755	8ft 6"	#5	RHW	4	£269.00
HR1756	9ft	#5	RHW	4	£279.00
HR1757	9ft	#6	RHW	4	£279.00
HR1758	9ft	#8	FW	4	£299.00
HR1759	9ft 6"	#6	FW	4	£299.00
HR1760	9ft 6"	#7	FW	4	£299.00
HR1761	10ft	#7	FW	4	£329.00
HR1762	10ft	#8	FW	4	£329.00

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Designed to deliver incredible performance at a price that offers unbeatable value. Manufactured from high grade carbon fibre in an all new advanced taper design, the GR50 is a light, fast recovering high performance fly rod with modern cosmetics and styling.

Code	Length	Handle	AFTM	Pcs	Price
GR2026	6ft	HW	#3	4	£129.99
GR2027	6ft 6"	HW	#4	4	£129.99
GR2028	7ft	HW	#3	4	£129.99
GR2029	7ft	HW	#5	4	£129.99

Code	Length	Handle	AFTM	Pcs	Price
GR2030	7ft 6"	HW	#3	4	£129.99
GR2031	8ft	HW	#4	4	£139.99
GR2032	8ft	HW	#6	4	£139.99
GR2033	8ft 6"	HW	#5	4	£139.99
GR2034	9ft	HW	#5	4	£139.99
GR2035	9ft	HW	#6	4	£139.99
GR2036	9ft	FW	#8	4	£149.99
GR2037	9ft	FW	#6	4	£149.99
GR2038	9ft 6"	FW	#7	4	£149.99
GR2039	9ft 6"	FW	#8	4	£149.99
GR2040	10ft	FW	#6	4	£149.99
GR2041	10ft	FW	#7	4	£149.99
GR2042	10ft	FW	#8	4	£149.99

HARDY 8FT #5 CLASSIC GLASS ROD

This lightweight rod is at the core of the Classic range. Great to look at with traditional fittings and cosmetics, while also loading well and with a smooth and accurate delivery. The slightly reduced resin content in the tip speeds recovery and gives a rod that crispness river anglers especially need for tight controlled casting. Complete with tube and canvas carry bag.

Code	Length	AFTM	Handle	Weight	Pcs	RRP	Price
HR0994	8ft	#5	Mod RHW	3.4oz	2	£349.00	£174.00

DAIWA TROUT FLY RODS

The simple, elegant Daiwa Trout Fly rod delivers performance and quality at a bafflingly good price. The 3pc carbon blank sports a crisp medium fast action, and comes in a selection of sizes to cover most freshwater, single handed applications.

Code	Length	AFTM	Pcs	RRP	Our Price
DW6004	9ft	#6	3	£99.99	£29.99
DW6005	9ft 6"	#7	3	£99.99	£29.99
DW6006	10ft	#7	3	£99.99	£29.99

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Fishing means many different things



The Author with a nice tope.

It used to be that going fishing meant one of two things. Either you went sea fishing, or you went freshwater fishing. These two things could be further broken down into boat and shore fishing in the case of sea fishing, and game (which meant fly fishing) or coarse fishing in the case of freshwater fishing.

Nowadays, it seems that there is no end to the list of sub-interests involved in fishing. Fresh water carp angling has always been a bit of a specialist area with its own vocabulary, such as:

“Spodding out a good bed before dropping a hair-rigged boilie on a number 10 barbless on a chod rig,” takes some time to understand. But now you have match anglers and pike/predator anglers also having their own sections in the angling shops.

There has been even more of a split

with some sea anglers going down the route of ultra light lures which look like a bit of rubber band and tiny hooks to target fish that I used to catch with a net from the rocks as a kid. I suppose they are more abundant than the larger fish we used to catch. One of the biggest groups at the moment is bass angling, with a revolution in recent years from bait fishing to lure angling for them, all involving rods and lures designed for targeting bass. The price of some of the new rods is horrifying but they are

designed like jet planes.

Over the past many years, I have been lucky enough to be able to try all sorts of types of ways to catch fish, even some which are strictly illegal but I worked as a Fishery Officer so we could use methods only allowed to survey waters and stocks including electrofishing and netting. I even took part in a clearance by poisoning the water to kill everything in it; a sometimes necessary tool in fisheries management. I did at one point try

bow-fishing on a misunderstanding, but — no excuses — it is illegal in Ireland in any freshwater. However it was an experience. Not as easy as one might think. I have used a cast net to catch mackerel and found them to be too efficient unless you want to catch a lot of bait. Of course I am talking here about recreational fishing or angling so no fish I caught was sold. I have trolled for big game in waters all around the world with very limited success, but I have seen a marlin free-jumping and also caught a sailfish, and in Alaska I caught halibut. But anything I have seen, can be done with varying degrees of success without travelling outside Europe.

Ireland has some of the best opportunities for angling in the world. There are plenty of small fish and even a variety of very big fish if that's your thing. We still have some good salmon rivers, which are within most people's budget if you do it right. I spent many days trying for a salmon and caught one after only a few tries, but it took years to get a second, but local economies benefited from my attempts through B&Bs and meals in pubs and hotels. I just wish that anglers had the same influence that other stakeholders have.

Stalking fish

One consistent thing about all the methods I have tried is that an angler can be surprised by what takes his bait. Whether it's a small flatfish grabbing his salmon fly or a wreck-fish taking a shark bait. This is what angling is about. Only when you are actually stalking a fish can you tell if it is what you might catch; I try this often with grey mullet, and they are one of the hardest fighting fish you will find. Even then, when using a fly I have caught a sea trout when I least suspected it.

Boat fishing at sea often throws up surprises. You can be armed for tope and catch ray all day, or the much maligned spotted dogfish. Even experienced sea anglers will say: "It feels like a ray or doggie," or whatever,



My son Finn was surprised to catch this thornback ray.

only to get a surprise when the fish can actually be seen. Mind you, you quickly realise that some fish take the bait in a particular way, but you can still be mistaken.

In truth the variety of types of fishing that can be enjoyed is almost endless. Some folk stick to a particular type of angling and are truly missing out. I like to try everything I can. The real anglers are the multi-specimen anglers who specialise in catching large fish of many species. I know some that are not actually 'Jack of all trades and master of none' as you might think, these guys tend to be 'masters' of lots of 'trades.' Being able to catch a specimen fish of twenty different

species is quite an achievement as it means being able to target both sea and freshwater fish very effectively.

Maybe I'm a 'fair weather' angler

My own efforts, I have to admit, are a lot less impressive. I could be described as a bit of a fair weather angler. I'll have a great day sitting on the bank or beach boiling up a Kelly kettle or Billy can of tea and watching a rod tip. I'm even partial to a sandwich which tastes slightly of frozen mackerel. If this is on a boat I often use a rod bell to alert me to any bites while I relax with a cuppa. Any angler will tell you, that if you want to know when



This time a fine pike was caught and quickly returned.

you will get a bite, it's just as you take your first sip of tea. I have been shark fishing in rough weather and simply don't enjoy spending more time hanging on to the boat than actually fishing. A decent stable boat is important. In saying that I have got many bites just after someone on board has thrown up over the side.

There are a lot of worse things you could be doing than sitting on a bank or beach drinking tea and watching a rod tip. If you want to be active, lure fishing or spinning offer all the activity you want. Personally I get a pain in between my shoulder blades after an hour spinning. But I'm old! I know chaps who will happily spend hours casting and retrieving. Yes, they catch more fish than me.

If I catch a fish it's a bonus, whatever fishing I do. I fish to get out into nature and maybe catch my dinner. Fish do not live in ugly places. This is

the kind of thinking I try to install in my own kids and any young people I take fishing. My son has had some good catches in his thirteen years. Having spent years sitting with me

watching fishing on television he has picked up some bad habits, but it still cracks me up every time he yells: "Fish on," as soon as he feels the weight of a fish on his (or sometimes my) line. I am looking forward to taking him shark fishing this year. I will let him use my own shark gear, which I bought in 1976 when I first started fishing for blue shark. A regular oiling and a small bit of TLC mean that this set-up is still working as well as when I first bought it. Many things in any tackle shop are designed to catch anglers rather than fish. Any angler will attest to the amount of 'stuff' you accumulate over the years. Some of it will never see water.

However it is not necessary to spend a fortune to catch fish as several companies do starter kits at reasonable prices which can catch many species (a subject for an article in its own right).

I have been fishing long enough to remember the bad old days of piles of dead dogfish left on a harbour wall after a competition. Thankfully this does not happen these days. I am all in favour of a person's right to bring home a few fish for food or bait but I hate to see bags of fish taken which they cannot possibly use. Enjoy the fishing, enjoy the surroundings but please remember that even dead fish deserve some respect.



Mullet fishing can be tricky at times but very rewarding.

'Buzzing' for trout in the Big Puddle



In the centre of England, flanked on one side by the M1 and on the other by the A1 is a little secret. This island's smallest and oldest county, Rutland nestles between the flat Lincolnshire Fens to the East and the cities of Leicester and Nottingham to the West. At just 18 square miles, you could easily miss it on your way speeding South to London or North towards Yorkshire and the Northeast, but to drive on past would be to miss a little gem of a county nicknamed 'the Cotswolds Without the Crowds' by its relatively few visitors.

The county motto 'Multum in Parvo' ... 'much in little' gives us a clue to one of Rutland's greatest attractions. In the middle of this charming county with its rolling English countryside, its honey stoned and often thatched buildings, lies the biggest man-made lake in Western Europe, Rutland Water.

With 26 miles of shoreline and covering almost 3,500 acres there is little wonder that Rutlanders call it 'The Big Puddle'. Completed in the 70's it

has now matured into a stunning piece of water popular with cyclists, sailors, birdwatchers and fly fishers.

Trout anglers visit from all over the Britain, Ireland and Europe to fly fish from the bankside or from a boat. This is no little stock pond, you have to read the water in many different conditions and wind directions. It is as demanding a lake as any wild fishery.

However, it is the trout themselves which make this water something rather special. It is stocked with rainbows and brown trout from 1.5 to 3 pounds. But the water is such good quality that it contains an incredible amount of natural food for those trout to feed on. And feed they do! so if you catch one of the 'grown-on' rainbow or brown trout of 4-5 pounds you'll realise that the quality of these Rutland trout are the main reason why it is so popular with fly fishers. To give an idea of what this lake can produce, the record brown trout was caught in 2013 by a fish which was stocked 10 years previously and came out just short of 17.5

pounds!!

When I arrived in Rutland 22 years ago for a job move from my native Yorkshire, I was used to fishing free stone rivers with traditional spider wet fly patterns; snipe and purple, partridge and orange. Moving to house on the banks of Rutland made me think that I'd arrived at the home of 'blobs' and 'boobies'; the dark arts of fly fishing; of chucking out 30 yards of fast sink line and ripping gaudy lures back to catch recently stocked trout? However I soon realised this was not the case at all.

Of course, lures do catch fish here, lots of them, but they do tend to take what I now call those 'daft stockies'. If you use more imitative patterns though, copying the natural food which these fish eat, you will tend to catch the better fish. These fish are 'grown-on':- fit, full-tailed, and as wild as you can get within an albeit 'artificial' reservoir and they fight like tigers. A grown on or overwintered Rutland rainbow looks the spitting image of a bright chrome,



Buzzers on Rutland.

straight from the sea grilse, having lost its magenta flash and becoming a bar of silver. The browns also turn silver with black spots, looking to all the world like a spanking fresh seatrout. Seeing 30-50 metres of backing screaming off into the distance is the norm when you hook one in shallow water. Did I say these fish are almost wild? They're bloody furious when you hook one!

The day job eventually came to a halt and 12 years ago I began a new chapter in life as a professional fly fishing coach and guide and I opened my lakeside lodge for B&B guests. I now introduce anglers and beginners to the delights of this piece of water almost daily. When I have a day off, I usually go fishing! I see Rutland Water in all her moods, sometimes she'll kiss you, and sometimes she'll gently remind you not to take her for granted.

Let's return to the imitative flies, what do Rutland trout feed on and what flies do we use to imitate that? Well this changes throughout the season and with various weather conditions but about 70% of any still water trout's diet is made up from one insect. The Chironomid Midge. This is a non-biting (thankfully) midge which appears like plumes of smoke coming from the trees buzzing away like a electricity pylon. So we call these insect 'Buzzers'.

Anglers on the west coast of Ireland call them duck flies, but buzzers they, are and 'buzz', they do.



The hatch has already begun.

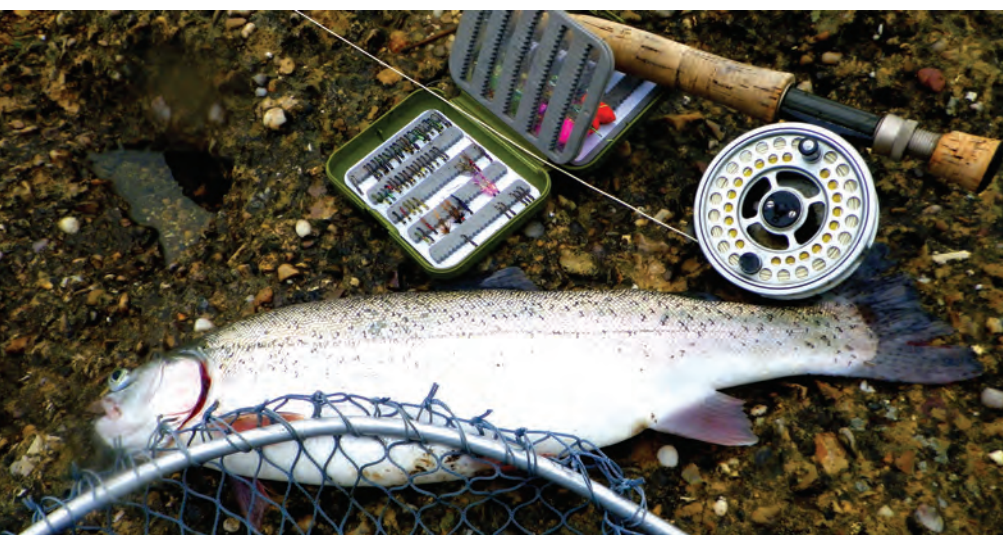
For one, we'll take the buzzer.



A couple of these should do the business.




A nicely tied buzzer to suit the occasion.



Caught on the buzzer.

This insect, starts life as a little red worm wriggling about in the mud and silt. A bloodworm pattern fished deep is perfect in cold conditions. But when the water warms up, usually in late April/May, these little red wrigglers change into the pupa stage and swim to the surface- Buzzer time! Buzzers are like chocolate to trout, they love them. It's common to examine the stomach contents of a trout taken for the pot and see hundreds of buzzers in its gut. The interesting thing about buzzers though, it that, although the larvae is a red worm, you never quite know what colour the pupa stage will be.

Nature/habitat/conditions, who really knows but these insects, swimming to the surface can be coloured black, green, brown, grey or claret. The trout in the lake will be focussed on that particular colour on the day. So we must be aware of which colour buzzer is hatching and therefor what colour the fish are feeding on. Buzzers tend to swarm around your head, so swat one and look at its colour (the adult midge will be the same colour as the aquatic pupa). Look at the cobwebs on fences around the lake, or



check your car bonnet if you've driven through a swarm. Or better still if you're lucky enough to catch one, use the marrow spoon and check the stomach contents. Trout are opportunistic so though you may catch on the wrong colour, you will catch more using the correct shade of buzzer.

Later in the season, upward looking trout tend to take the buzzer as it emerges from the water to become the adult midge. As they become trapped in the surface film for many minutes, large trout gorge on these easy pickings. This is the time to fish a buzzer pattern suspended in the surface. This visual method is the cream of buzzer fishing and we look forward to it just as Irish anglers enthuse when then Mayfly is up.

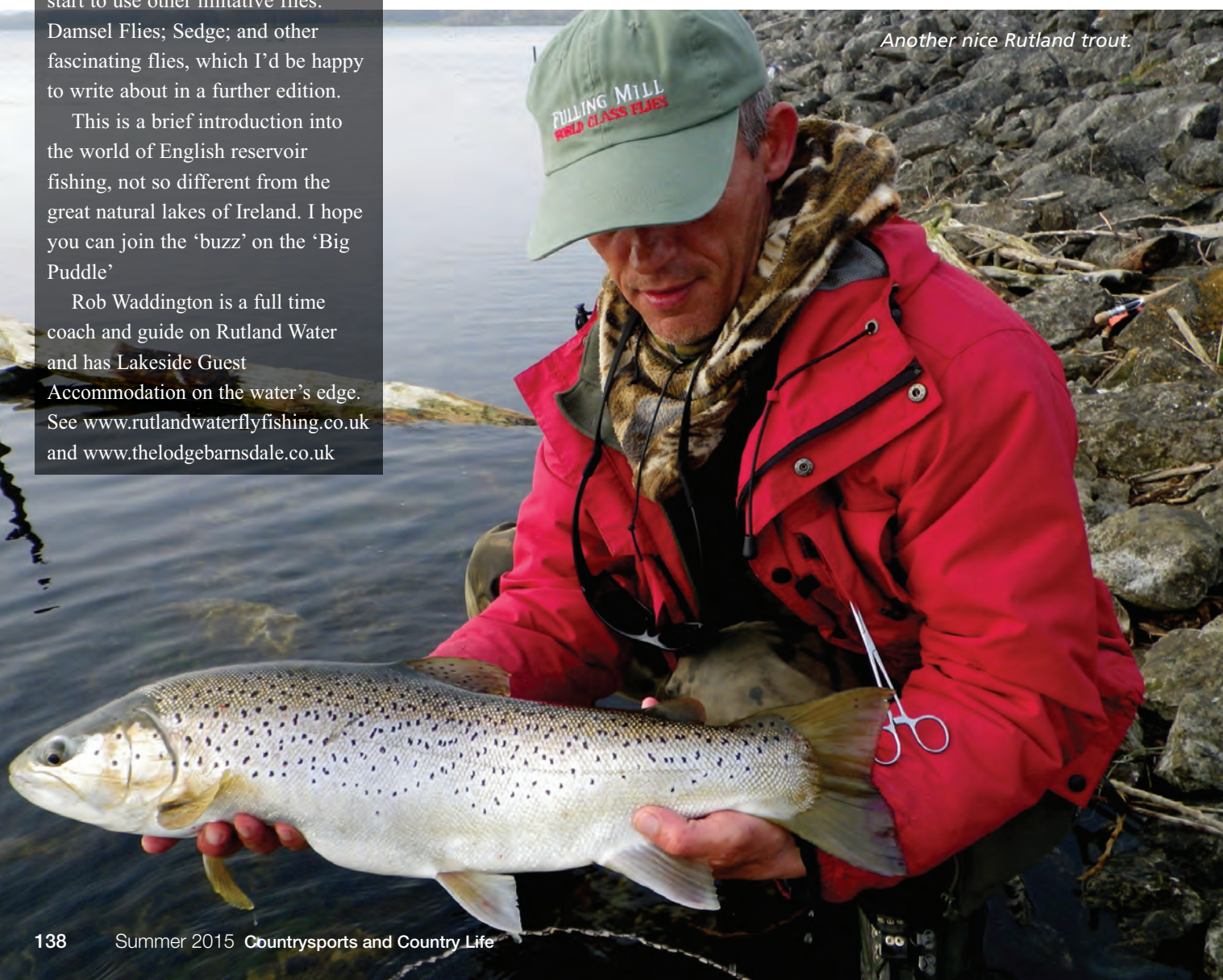
Then as the year progresses, we'll start to use other imitative flies: Damsel Flies; Sedge; and other fascinating flies, which I'd be happy to write about in a further edition.

This is a brief introduction into the world of English reservoir fishing, not so different from the great natural lakes of Ireland. I hope you can join the 'buzz' on the 'Big Puddle'

Rob Waddington is a full time coach and guide on Rutland Water and has Lakeside Guest Accommodation on the water's edge. See www.rutlandwaterflyfishing.co.uk and www.thelodgebarnsdale.co.uk

Rob's Lakeside B&B.

Another nice Rutland trout.



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