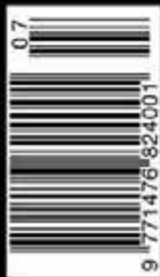


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Country Sports and Country Life Rol Comment

I enjoyed a busy and hugely enjoyable foot hunting season during the 2018 / 2019 season in pursuit of hare and fox with several packs throughout the country. Every year I head down to north Cork for a weeklong beagling festival and this year was no different. I met the beagling pack on a breezy, cool morning in the middle of nowhere in North Cork. It was Saturday, January 26 and the start of another fantastic festival of beagling in this part of the country.

The organisers have been hosting the festival for many years, a very impressive achievement in itself as it's hard to keep these things going. The organisers are as enthusiastic as they ever have been about the week and the festival hasn't diminished a whit in quality.

Their pack could claim to be the finest beagling pack in the country. The huntsman is a small, fit as a fiddle, very friendly man who oversees a well turned out pack of hounds and puts a lot of energy and commitment into a day's hunting. The first time I hunted with them was 25 years ago and while the other beagle packs I was hunting with at the time would stay out for three or four hours this particular pack would stay out for about five hours. They were enthusiastic hunters, being lovers of houndwork, the chase and the beautiful landscapes in their part of the world. Like myself they have become greyer and older since then but remain no less enthusiastic.

This was my fifth time attending the festival, and I made the weekend hunts. Unfortunately I couldn't hunt during the week because of work commitments. A couple of years ago I hunted all nine days of the festival and in retrospect I couldn't think of a better holiday. To be sure, one was weary and sore each evening after an awful lot of exercise, but there was a great sense of satisfaction and the social interaction was very enjoyable.

Some of that social interaction usually takes place in a traditional pub, in a small village, run by a very friendly publican who is a credit to his profession. His hospitality is always excellent. One evening he laid on an impressive spread of sandwiches and sausages for us which we wolfed down after burning a lot of energy during the afternoon. This pub is also often the scene of singsongs, including the performance of hunting songs, which are rarely heard outside hunting circles. Indeed, singsongs each evening in local pubs after each day's hunting are very much part of the festival's tradition. It would be nice to hunt hard every day and sing hard every evening but if we are being honest most of us don't have the stamina to maintain such a regimen for nine days in a row.

The country on the first day was a mixture of rolling moorland, pasture and forestry. It's dominated by the nearby towering peaks of the Galty Mountains which looked magnificent and lofty in the winter sun. This area also has a healthy abundance of hares and we put up three during the afternoon. The first hare gave us a cracking chase, lasting non-stop for two hours. The scenting conditions were excellent and the beagles were able to keep the line for the full two hours. Eventually, however they lost it, and we cast about for half an hour, finally putting up a hare in tall grass on a flat piece of land.



Some people stood watching the action on the hillside. I, however, felt I needed some good exercise and tried to jog along as much as I could. Soon the sweat was dripping down into my eyes and along my cheeks and my white hunting shirt was damp with perspiration. The endorphins began to work their magic and as I temporarily paused and leaned on my long thumbstick I felt happy. This happy feeling persisted for much of the afternoon, including the warm feeling of contentment and satisfaction heading back to the cars in the diminishing light of dusk

after a cracker of a day's hunt.

That night my wife and I stayed in the Hibernian Hotel in the centre of Mallow. We like this hotel. It's friendly and welcoming. We also like the town. At midnight we brought our two dogs down to the large park beside the old stone bridge crossing the River Blackwater. A storm had swept in and heavy rain and strong winds buffeted us. It wasn't a night to be out and the streets were practically deserted. Stormy, wetting weather like this can of course be exhilarating, and we returned to our hotel room red-cheeked and invigorated. Our walk had taken us by the town's castle and the former dwelling places of Thomas Davis and Anthony Trollope. Mallow is a town of considerable history, growing up around an important crossing point over the wide Blackwater. Its Tudor period, empty and roofless castle looked atmospheric bathed in the illumination of the spotlights. Anthony Trollope worked in the Postal Service here for a while as well as hunting in the local countryside. He was a very keen fox hunter. Davis of course was the famous poet and nationalist, a man of remarkable intelligence who died terribly young at the age of 30.

Three visiting packs hunted during the festival this year. One of them, a group of about 50 very friendly people, including their huntsman and 30 lively hounds, hunted the estate around a former Anglo-Irish house, a lovely piece of country which it was a pleasure to hunt through. Unfortunately, the scenting conditions were not as good as the previous day, being patchy throughout, which meant a number of chases lasting a few minutes, losing the line, and trying to refind it which could take several minutes.

The other two packs experienced a mix of scenting conditions during the week which is the usual state of affairs, and overall they declared it to be another successful festival of hunting. A dinner dance at the end of the week was well attended, with about 150 people sitting down for the event.

The festival hunts in Limerick as well as Cork. Kiltelly is a village in East Limerick set in interesting hill country (the creation of volcanic activity) and it's a really fabulous place from a foothunter's point of view. Hares are always found here and there's a grandstand view from the side of a hill of the action in the wide valley below. It was in Kiltelly that I enjoyed one of my best days beagling a couple of years ago. This year was a joint meet, featuring two of the packs, and thankfully was another cracker.

Derek Fanning, ROI Editor

Country Sports and Country Life Northern Comment

If you are active on social media and are at all interested in shooting and conservation you might have noticed that a sudden announcement in England jolted some leading lights in membership organisations into action.

News came that Natural England (NE) was temporarily revoking three general licences in England that allow the shooting and trapping of most pest bird species to prevent serious damage or disease; to preserve public health or public safety; and to conserve flora or fauna.

These general licences cover 16 species of birds including carrion and hooded crows, magpies and woodpigeon and cover control methods including shooting; the destruction of eggs and nests; and the use of cage traps such as Larsen traps and multi-catch traps. During that time, anyone needing to control one of these 16 bird species where there is no reasonable non-lethal alternative will need to apply for an individual licence. NE said that it was going to simplify the application process for individual licences and details will be available on its gov.uk website.

BASC told The Times that Natural England needs to move quickly to repair the damage done by the decision to revoke three general licences. Chairman Peter Glenser QC reiterated that the decision was taken without consultation with the rural community and said it was “an appalling way to do business”.

The CA said that while Natural England claim a new set of licences will be brought in, the revocation and confusion over the coming days and weeks will leave farmers, pest controllers and conservationists with significant problems. (As I write) the new set of licences have not yet even been consulted on, leaving huge uncertainty about the ability to control wild birds going forward.

CE's Tim Bonner said: “...the withdrawal of Open General Licences at incredibly short notice is completely impractical and irresponsible, and will result in thousands of people unknowingly breaking the law. Pigeons, corvids and other species that damage crops, livestock and biodiversity have always been regularly and lawfully controlled without bureaucratic restrictions. To withdraw the historic ability to manage these species without individual licences at 36 hours notice is a recipe for disaster. Many of those involved in pest control will be unaware of the changes, and this decision will only serve to bring the law into disrepute.

“The decision to bring in a new set of licences without consulting stakeholders or the public is even more bizarre. We have already contacted Natural England for an urgent meeting and will be keeping our members in England up to date with this evolving issue.”

A comment on social media summed the position up well: if you are using GWCT data ignore the data published in the Applied Journal of Ecology that shows how predator control carried out by keepers on grouse moors increase fledging rates in curlew and lapwing from 23% to 64%? Why seek to make the continuation of this self funded work so much harder? Was it right to kill one bird for the sake of another? Well, this is exactly what the RSPB believe, which is why they kill over 500 crows on their reserves each year.

Neighbouring farmers contribution to the RSPB's efforts to protect breeding waders will now be so much harder. Predator



control needs to be conducted on a landscape scale. Finally, Defra Secretary of State, Michael Gove, decided that the final decisions in relation to the granting of general licences for the management of certain wild birds should be returned to him. You couldn't make it up!

As many of you know the annual Game Fair extravaganzas are very definitely almost upon us.

Brand new for the ROI, The Irish Country Lifestyle Festival will be staged at the world renowned Galway Racecourse on 15 & 16 June. It's being combined with the established Galway Homes & Gardens Festival into one landmark event.

And then almost without taking a breath, Northern Ireland embraces the country lifestyle at the Irish Game & Fine Food Festival in the richly picturesque sounds of Shanes Castle, Antrim on 29 & 30 June.

Year after year, the crowds get bigger and bigger, the day-long entertainment draws record numbers and the number of traders and variety of country and countryside goods is truly amazing.

And it's all put on by Albert Titterington. Well, no not really. While he was the individual who drew together a group of enthusiasts over 40 unbroken years ago to launch the first ever game fair at Clondeboyne, he's the first to admit it's a real team effort with up to 400 people involved in organising the event at Shanes Castle.

Last year, I was amazed just how many who chatted to me on the Irish Country Sports & County Life stand remembered Clondeboyne with affection, and had actually been there. For many it was their introduction to Game fairs and country sports. I'll always remember the family represented by three generations (and another generation on the way) at Shanes, all of whom who had come along as youngsters introduced by their father and mother. To quote them 'wouldn't miss it, it's what we do as a family, 'sure you have to fly the country flag, what with all the anti rubbish about these days.' Their words, not mine, and I agree entirely.

Just think - all those years ago at Clondeboyne there was none of the countryside organisations in the form we have today. For example, BFSS which was the forerunner of CA and later in Northern Ireland, the CAI, had a Regional Chairman and a part time Regional Secretary and that was it. Since then, as we got our own annual countryside extravaganza - annual game fairs - which drew the shooting, fishing and hunting communities, so too was countryside representation properly transformed in Northern Ireland.

So, this time as you get directions to park your car, get your free programme from someone standing near the gate, ask directions from a steward and wander along in the country air, and through the re-enactors campsites, please spare a thought for the hundreds of people who go to 'make the show' for you. They probably have been here for days leading up to your visit, have been on their feet since the crack of dawn and will be there long after you have made it home.

I hope that you enjoy Galway and Ballybrit and please stop by the Irish Country Sports & Country life magazine stand. We'll have free copies to take away, special offers and much more.

Paul Pringle, Northern Editor

Ireland plays role in international research programme to preserve threatened migratory fish



An angler-caught Shad

A new project which aims to promote international action and cooperation to conserve vulnerable migratory fish species is launching today. The DiadES initiative will see 30 partners from different countries participate in this European project with Inland Fisheries Ireland leading out on the project in Ireland.

The project launches as migratory fish and their habitats continue to come under pressure as a result of human activity and climate change. It will focus on fish such as shads, lampreys, eels, salmon, trout and mullet which are known as 'diadromous' fish as they migrate between fresh and salt waters to reproduce or feed.

The DiadES initiative intends to improve knowledge of the ecological, economic and cultural benefits offered by these migratory species while assessing the possibility of these species changing their locations due to climate change. It will also examine the emergence of new interactions between fish territories as a result of these relocations.

As part of the research, a transnational interactive atlas will be produced which will outline the current distribution of diadromous fish and how they help the ecosystem. It will forecast trends in the geographical distribution of various species and look at possible redistribution of some species as a result of climate change. It will also design a platform for stakeholders to explore different management strategies.

Dr Cathal Gallagher, Head of Research and Development said: "Throughout their life cycle, diadromous fish provide 'ecosystem services'. This means they provide food, regulate and support the ecosystem through the nutrient cycle and offer a recreational pursuit to local communities. All of these fish generate significant ecological, economic and cultural benefits for local communities across Europe.

We are keen to play our role in assessing and enhancing the role these fish play while also assisting them as they navigate the effects of climate change which has resulted in a reduction in their distribution."

The DiadES project is led by the French research institute Irstea and is financed by the Interreg Atlantic Area Programme of the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) to the value of €2.2 million.

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NARGC NEWS ROUNDUP

Hello to Irish Country Sports and Country Life readers.

At the time of writing I am planning to wet a line for the first time this season on Sunday next. This has been a busy time in NARGC circles and there was little time for fishing up to now.

Again, at the time of writing, the bombshell of the withdrawal of general licences by Natural England for the control of pest species has just recently burst. The madness of Packham's success will bring about reams of bureaucracy as pest controllers apply for multiple licences with, I expect annual renewals of same. Madness, I say because the premise on which the animal rights activists operate, is flawed. If pests are not controlled, then crop yields will suffer leading to higher prices for consumers. Animal feed will be contaminated causing waste and disease. Spoiled feed will have to be disposed of again, adding cost. We will lose countless songbirds and red listed ground nesting birds, like the curlew for instance, so these animal rights champions can trumpet their success over the shooting community.

Madness because the environment as we know it is the product of mankind's farming and sporting development. Re-wilding is nonsense! How do you re-wild a cow or a horse? Who will milk the cows or feed the horses? All available land will have to be put under the plough to feed the Vegan masses. River development, upland management and the preservation of marginal land for field sports will cease.

With no economic benefit to be had from meat farming, the national herds will have to be slaughtered to feed the plough. Organic farming will be starved of natural manure. The only birds we will see will be black scavengers as in a short time the egg raiders will eliminate their food



supply and then die off themselves. The only right that the Animal Rights brigade will confer will be the right to die for the survival of the scavengers.

Madness yes. Hairbrained indulgence of people grown rich, complacent and are capable of fad food choices. You won't find many vegans in famine torn parts of this world. They have infiltrated the corridors of the media and government, so we must be forever vigilant least we lose our own way of life.

Now for the rest of the news. Across all departments in the NARGC we have been active in progressing our programmes. Here is a quick report for the reader.

We have been training the trainers to keep their skills and qualifications up to date.

Amongst the activity was an outdoor first aid course for our



Training the Trainers in First Aid.



Some classwork for the enthusiastic course members.



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One of the presentations at last year's National Clay Bird Shoot.

trainers. We put the wellbeing of those attending courses to the fore and we strive to give the best tuition available.

We have completed the upgrade on our **Club of the Year competition**. The new booklet and entry forms are available from our website. Our Game Development Officer, Ger Burns or, via our Compensation Fund Office.

The National Clay Bird Shoot is in Ballinasloe again this year. We expect another great success with the help of Clonfad Gun Club and Mr Pat Loughnane.

June will find us in Galway also for the **Irish Country Lifestyle Festival**. I am looking forward to meeting many Irish Country Sports and Country Life readers there along with many old friends and acquaintances.

European focus next: The Chairman, Dan Curley accompanied by the Vice Chairman, Michael Fenlon and our FACE Vice president John Flannery,

attended the recent FACE meeting in Brussels. The hot issues of Lead Shot and the effects of the new CAP



Dr David Scallan, FACE Secretary General

(Common Agricultural Policy) were discussed and explored. These EU developments have a critical impact

on our sport. It is comforting to know that we have such a strong team battling for us.

On a happy note, our Associate Member and former holder of our PRO brief, Dr. David Scallan, secured the top job of Secretary General of FACE. David, a Sligo man, cut his teeth in the NARGC. He served as a Delegate for Galway (when he was in University) to the Governing Body of the NARGC and as a member of various Sub Committees, before being elected to the role of Public Relations Officer. David has a deep knowledge of shooting and conservation issues both here and on the Continent and we, his home Association, extend our heartiest congratulations and best wishes to our colleague and friend.



NARGC and other delegates at members meeting this spring.

With EU and local elections in the offing, representatives from the various electoral regions attended meetings with the candidates. Whether they deliver for field sports, only time will tell, but we know their faces and will lobby strongly on behalf of our members interests. Readers can rest assured that we will not rest when our sport is threatened.

Summer brings game rearing, predator control, maintenance and repairs to pens, rearing equipment and hopefully a few days in crop protection and if we are lucky, a little time on the river bank trying to fool fish into becoming supper.

I will close for now wishing 'tight lines to you all.' Talk again soon.

John Toal NARGC PRO



The N.A.R.G.C. Members' Compensation Fund

Members' Compensation Fund for Hunters, Clay Shooters, Target Shooters and others who are Members of our affiliated Clubs

The National Association of Regional Game Councils encourages game shooters and day/target shooters to support the Shooting Lobby by joining a Gun/Game Club, Clay Pigeon Club or Target Sports Club affiliated to the NARGC. With 24,000 Members, you will be joining the most authoritative voice for the sport of shooting in Ireland. You will also enjoy the benefits of your Compensation Fund, which pools the cash contributions of its members. Only Fund Members can benefit from the Compensation Fund. Protection is available for Fund Members up to a ceiling of €10m per incident. The Fund is administered by the Association in the best interests of the Association and its Associate Members.

The Association welcomes the affiliation of new Clubs through its RGC structure.



In addition, with the NARGC you have:

- Full-time staff dedicated to working for shooting interests
- A say in the running of the Association - elections/resolutions
- A Members' Magazine posted free to your home at least once annually
- Habitat and other Grants for your Club - €350,000 granted annually
- Special Funding for Grouse Projects
- Grants for the purchase of Predator Control equipment by Clubs
- Mallard/Pheasant Release subsidies for Clubs and RGC's - currently €4.37 per bird
- Research into Game and other species
- Club of the Year Award

- Game Meat Handling Courses
- Representation otherwise at EU level
- A good working relationship with Farmers
- An Association Shop - books, badges, stickers, ties etc
- Monitoring and input into the drafting of legislation affecting shooting sports
- Inter-Club & Inter-County Annual Clay Shoots - biggest Clay Shoot in Ireland
- Members' access to information/advice on all issues every day
- Proficiency Courses and Safety Seminars for Associate Members
- Constant Government lobbying in Ireland and at EU level

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Countryside Alliance



The Irish Red Grouse Association Conservation Trust (IRGACT) Secures Contract with the NPWS for Red Grouse Conservation Project

In 2018 the National Parks and Wildlife (NPWS) initiated a Grouse Conservation Project on Slieve Bloom Nature Reserve and contracted the IRGACT to manage predation levels and protect grouse nests during their critical breeding season.

This is a major new joint initiative by the National Parks and Wildlife Service and the IRGACT to enable the Red Grouse population to grow to a sustainable level on Slieve Bloom; thus allowing for the potential translocation of surplus grouse to other struggling grouse moors.

The IRGACT have committed its resources to working in collaboration with the NPWS on all aspects of this Grouse Management Project which will monitor population trends, protect nests and control predation levels for the duration of the project.

Irish Red Grouse populations are under pressure for a variety of reasons on most Irish moors and this initiative is dedicated to address the issues affecting their population and this project is at the heart of the IRGACT objectives.



Some of the shooters and their families who enjoyed the NIFTA event.

PSNI Online Firearms Applications – New Save and Retrieve Feature

As part of Firearms and Explosives Branch's (FEB) continuing drive to enhance their service provision to firearm certificate holders, they are delighted to announce an upgrade to the online firearms licence application process by introducing a 'Save and Retrieve' facility.

FEB have listened to feedback from their stakeholders and customers and have worked to develop a feature where people who are completing a firearms licence application form will be able to avail of an option to save their application form for a period of up to but not exceeding 72 hours from when they start their application form.

This feature will be available for each of the following application forms – Initial Grant, ReGrant, ReGrant with Variation, and Variation.

Guidelines are available on the website for applicants which can be found at https://www.psnipolice.uk/advice_information/firearms/online-application-information/.

This feature to the online system was launched on Thursday 14th March 2019.

The Northern Ireland Field Target Association – Perpetual Trophy Shoot

The Northern Ireland Field Target Association (NIFTA) recently held its perpetual trophy shoot at its grounds in Mid Ulster Air Rifle

Club, Loughgall, and at Cottage Quinn in Dungannon. The two-day event was well attended by shooters and their families and great weather was enjoyed by everyone.

A new NIFTA / Countryside Alliance Ireland trophy was kindly sponsored by Countryside Alliance Ireland and after a competitive two days' shooting Mark Belvins emerged as victorious.

The event concluded with a barbeque and everyone enjoyed an excellent meal of rabbit, pigeon and venison. NIFTA would like to express thanks to Countryside Alliance Ireland for kindly sponsoring our new perpetual trophy.

Countryside Alliance Responds to Natural England Revoking Three General Licences

Major changes to the General Licence announced by Natural England, on 23rd April at less than 36 hours notice has put thousands of people at risk of unknowingly breaking the law whilst controlling species such as pigeons and carrion crows from Thursday 25th April.

The ability to control several species of wild birds through licensing to prevent serious damage or disease, to preserve public health or public safety, and to conserve flora and fauna under 'open licences' will all be revoked in an unprecedented move by the statutory agency.

While Natural England claim a new set of licences will be brought in from Monday 29th April, the revocation and confusion over the coming days and weeks will leave farmers, pest controllers and conservationists with significant problems. The



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new set of licences have not yet even been consulted on, leaving huge uncertainty about the ability to control wild birds going forward.

This comes at a particularly sensitive time when new-born lambs need protecting from crows, crops need protecting from pigeons, and dozens of red-listed species need protection from corvids. The decision also has a direct impact on pest controllers who use the General Licence to preserve public health and safety. Any delays to licences being granted because of this revocation could risk human health.

Tim Bonner, Chief Executive of the Countryside Alliance, said: "Whatever Natural England's legal advice, the withdrawal of Open General Licences at incredibly short notice is completely impractical and irresponsible, and will result in thousands of people unknowingly breaking the law. Pigeons, corvids and other species that damage crops, livestock and biodiversity have always been regularly and lawfully controlled without bureaucratic restrictions. To withdraw the historic ability to manage these species without individual licences at 36 hours notice is a recipe for disaster. Many of those involved in pest control will be unaware of the changes, and this decision will only serve to bring the law into disrepute.

"The decision to bring in a new set of licences without consulting stakeholders or the public is even more bizarre. Countryside Alliance has already contacted Natural England for an urgent meeting and will be keeping our members in England up to date with this evolving issue."

Please note the above does not have any bearing on practices in Northern Ireland at the moment. Countryside Alliance Ireland (devolved region of Countryside Alliance) keeps our members up to date on relevant issues throughout the UK and Ireland (and elsewhere as required) and we support Countryside Alliance in their endeavours to reverse this decision.

However, we are also mindful that we cannot be complacent and any attempt to change legislation (which may come at short notice) that would unjustly affect our members' legitimate and vital activities would not go unchallenged.

Dunnyboe Target Club Donate £1000 to Alzheimer's Society

Dunnyboe Target Club held a 100 yard shoot in aid of charity. Philip Richardson won the competition which raised £1,000 for Alzheimer's Society.



A magnificent result - Amanda McGale receiving the cheque on behalf of the Alzheimer's Society from Stephen McHale, Dunnyboe Target Club.



One of the practical sessions gets underway.

Stephen McHale (Dunnyboe Target Club Committee Member) presented Amanda McGale (Community Fundraiser - West Northern Ireland) with the proceeds. Alzheimer's Society is the UK's leading dementia charity. They provide information and support, improve care, fund research, and create lasting change for people affected by dementia.

For more information - www.alzheimers.org.uk

IRGACT Host Moorland Management and Predation Courses

At the end of April, the Irish Red Grouse Association Trust in conjunction with the GWCT hosted a two day programme covering various aspects of moorland management and predation control.

Held in Birr, County Offaly, the four training sessions covered a vast range of topics including corvid control, tunnel trapping of mink, snaring and lamping, grouse health and diseases. Sessions were both theoretical and practical and were much enjoyed by the attendees.



All smiles after the moorland management and predation control course.

CAI at Galway and Shanes Castle

Countryside Alliance Ireland will be exhibiting at both of the Great Game Fairs of Ireland this summer.

At Galway (Saturday 15 & Sunday 16 June), we are pleased to be sharing our presence with the Irish Red Grouse Association and Tom Dunne and at Shanes (Saturday 29 & Sunday 30 June) we hope to have RADAR, PSNI FEB, BDS NI & the Sunnyland Beagles.

Please do call in to see us!



Firearms and ammunition can only be sold to permit holders. Fig. shows firearm with optional extra. Blaser InnoSport © 2019

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The GWCT Scottish Game Fair



The Fair hosts the very popular show of Hill Ponies in their working gear.

Are you game? The GWCT Scottish Game Fair, in association with NFU Mutual, returns to Scone Palace Parklands with a plethora of events and spectacles.

Now in its 31st year, the GWCT Scottish Game Fair is preparing to welcome thousands of people to the event over three days, July 5th - 7th. Organised by the Game & Wildlife Conservation Trust this fantastic celebration of conservation and countryside offers competitions, main ring events and 'have-a-go' activities, all while raising vital funds for research into game and wildlife throughout rural Scotland.

As well as birds of prey and terrier racing, The Main Ring, in association with Brewin Dolphin, will host the Jez Avery Stunt Show, which is sure to be a great attraction for all visitors. Working hill ponies will compete for the popular Fred Taylor Memorial Trophy and there will also be a full programme of clay shooting, fishing, gundog and scurry competitions, with lots of opportunities for expert tuition.

Time to shoot

The ever-popular shooting area offers a range of experiences and competitions for experts and beginners alike. There is a great range of disciplines to suit or challenge all, and all at affordable prices. These stands are set up for novices to come and try the Clay Shooting experience, which is this year organised by Pentangle Shooting Services and Buchan Field Sports. There is no age restriction - it doesn't matter if you're eight or 80 - everyone is encouraged to give it a go. There will be qualified and friendly instructors to look after you, with a gun that suits your needs while all clays, cartridges and safety protection are provided.

The British Association of Shooting & Conservation will also be at hand in the shooting area, offering a full range of shotgun coaching, including the BASC "Safe Shot" award, which recognises your knowledge of shotgun safety and gun handling. This year BASC is bringing the ST-2 Shooting Simulator, aimed at improving the shooters skills and enjoyment of the sport. Guns, cartridges and safety equipment are provided.

Saturday is Ladies Day and following the huge popularity of last year's ladies clay shooting competition, for 2019, those wishing to participate have the option to purchase a special Ladies' Shooting Package in advance. The package includes entry to the

fair, clay shooting and lunch for just £46.00.

Meanwhile, clay shooting competitions run throughout the weekend with entries open at 10am each day at Shooting Control where full details of rules, entry requirements and prizes can be found.

Fred Taylor Memorial Trophy

London gunmaker John Rigby & Co. is once again sponsoring the sixth annual Fred Taylor Memorial Trophy for Working Hill Ponies. We are again proud to host the very popular show of Hill Ponies in their working gear. We are fortunate to have John Rigby & Co. as our main sponsor this year, who will give a stalking rifle to the winning estate.

All about dogs

The Four Nations International Gundog Competition takes place on Saturday July 6. Now in its third year of being an international event, the competition - sponsored by Skinner's Pet Foods - features retrievers and spaniels in separate categories. Last year's overall winner was England, followed by Scotland in second place.

Meanwhile, dog owners of all breeds are encouraged to take part in the scurry competitions held daily. The competition simulates the requirement of a dog to mark a shot bird and to retrieve speedily to hand, using two dummies. There are generous daily prizes for Open, and Junior (<17) entrants and a trophy for the fastest time over the three days.

Birds of prey await

During Elite Falconry's two flying demonstrations in the Main Ring on all three days of the Fair, they will be flying birds from all across the varied spectrum to show tremendous variety, from some of the smallest, to some of the largest birds.

Get hooked on Fisherman's Row

The fishing area will feature fishing demonstrations from industry experts, a casting clinic and competitions such as fly-tying on the banks of the majestic river Tay. Fisherman's Row leads from the Game Fair Main Ring down to the bank of the Tay, where thousands of anglers descend each year.



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Win One-on-One Training with MOTV

Global subscription-based streaming service MyOutdoor TV.com (MOTV) has announced a new competition in which four lucky winners will receive a “money-can’t-buy” training session with legendary boar hunter and star of the Wild Boar Fever series, Franz-Albrecht Oettingen-Spielberg, at Ulm Shooting Cinema in Germany. In addition, among the four winners, each will receive a €100 gift card voucher from each of the competition sponsors—Aimpoint, SAUER, Hornady and Härkila—for a total of €400 in prize money.

To enter the competition, which is open to residents of EU Member States and/or the United Kingdom, contestants simply need to sign up for a 7-day free trial of MOTV before June 2, 2019. Participation is limited to one entry per person.

At the end of the draw, four winners will be selected and notified via the email address provided at subscription. If the winner does not accept the prize within a period of two weeks from receipt of the prize notification by express declaration to the organiser (email is sufficient), the claim to the prize shall lapse and another winner shall be determined by lot.



Franz-Albrecht, star of Wild Boar Fever

Even better, everyone who enters the competition gets a 7-day free trial to access the MOTV platform, where you can watch the very best shooting, fishing, hunting and outdoor content, including Wild Boar Fever series' 1-9.

To enter the competition, follow this link:
www.myoutdoortv.com

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New Irish Cancer Society Policy Angers Many

A new policy adopted by the Irish Cancer Society has angered many in the hunting, shooting and fishing fraternity.

In February, ICS announced that it will no longer accept donations from fox hunting clubs, immediately causing consternation not only among the members of fox hunting clubs but also among shooters and anglers.

The ICS seems to have positioned the activity of fox hunting alongside the tobacco and alcohol industries on their list of banned donors. It's alleged that the move came after complaints from cancer survivors and others who objected to the society receiving money from an annual hunting festival which takes place in the north Cork, north Kerry and west Limerick area.

Following on from this announcement, the National Association of Regional Game Councils wrote to the ICS expressing the NARGC's displeasure at this turn of events, and seeking a clarification on matters. They have since received no reply.

In their letter the NARGC pointed out that they could see no logical reason for the refusal because nothing to do with hunting causes or contributes to cancer in any way. In fact, they added, the exercise, fresh air, interest in dogs and the outdoors, the friendships and camaraderie all contribute to positive physical and mental health, combined with a good, balanced, non-stressed lifestyle. Such a lifestyle has been estimated to reduce the chance of getting cancer by some 30 to 40%.

The NARGC consists of 960 Gun and Hunt Clubs and has 24,000 members. The Irish Cancer Society has been the recipient of numerous donations from these clubs over the years, amounting to several hundred thousand Euro. These donations are fostered for proper and genuine reasons, with no strings attached, no tax advantage, no PR advantage. The only stipulation is that the money is used wisely by the receiving organisations.

The County Cork Mink Hunt also wrote to the Irish Cancer Society expressing their displeasure at the decision, and they did receive a reply. In that letter the ICS said its executive "received a number of expressions of concern from volunteers and supporters" around the time of the annual hunting festival,

"questioning and / or objecting to our association with hunting. These were regarded as bona fide concerns. We have no reason to believe that this was any form of organised campaign or protest. On the basis of those concerns, the Society's Executive team concluded that it would not be appropriate to accept future donations from hunting events."

€20K help to protect important fishery



Security system at a very important location at the falls.

A new project at Ballisodare Fishing Club outside Ballisodare Town will help protect this important fishery. The private fishery, which was developed last year to include a state of the art fishery office and two public viewing platforms, is a renowned salmon angling destination. The fishery was vulnerable to illegal fishing and a protection programme was required to ensure the sustainability of local fish stocks.

The project, devised and delivered by the club, was supported with funding from Inland Fisheries Ireland's National Strategy for Angling Development.

This section of the fishery was vulnerable to illegal activity in the past as Ballisodare Fishery is the entry point for salmon from the tide into the freshwater and large numbers of fish are often present. It is hoped that the security system will now support protection activities with the installation of modern security lighting alongside a CCTV system to allow for 24 hour monitoring of the fishery. The high standard security system incorporates security cameras which have a night vision mode and flood lighting.

IFI said: "This new protection system in Ballisodare will play an important role in deterring illegal fishing and catching those who continue to commit offences. This is crucial if we want to conserve this resource for future generations. It is fitting that this project has been completed just as we celebrate International Year of the Salmon which takes place in 2019 and offers us an opportunity to start a conversation about the importance of conservation and how we can inspire action in this regard across Ireland."

Dermot Glennon, Director of Ballisodare Fishery, said: "The Ballisodare River is an excellent Salmon Fishery which boasts an average catch of 1,500+ each season over the past five years. We commence the salmon fishing season quite late every year to assist the conservation of this highly valued fish and to ensure its viability in the long term. Since 2010, our fishery has also seen the release of almost 30 per cent of salmon caught by anglers. We are delighted to have installed this security system with support from Inland Fisheries Ireland and look forward to continuing to welcome domestic and overseas anglers to this site for many years to come."



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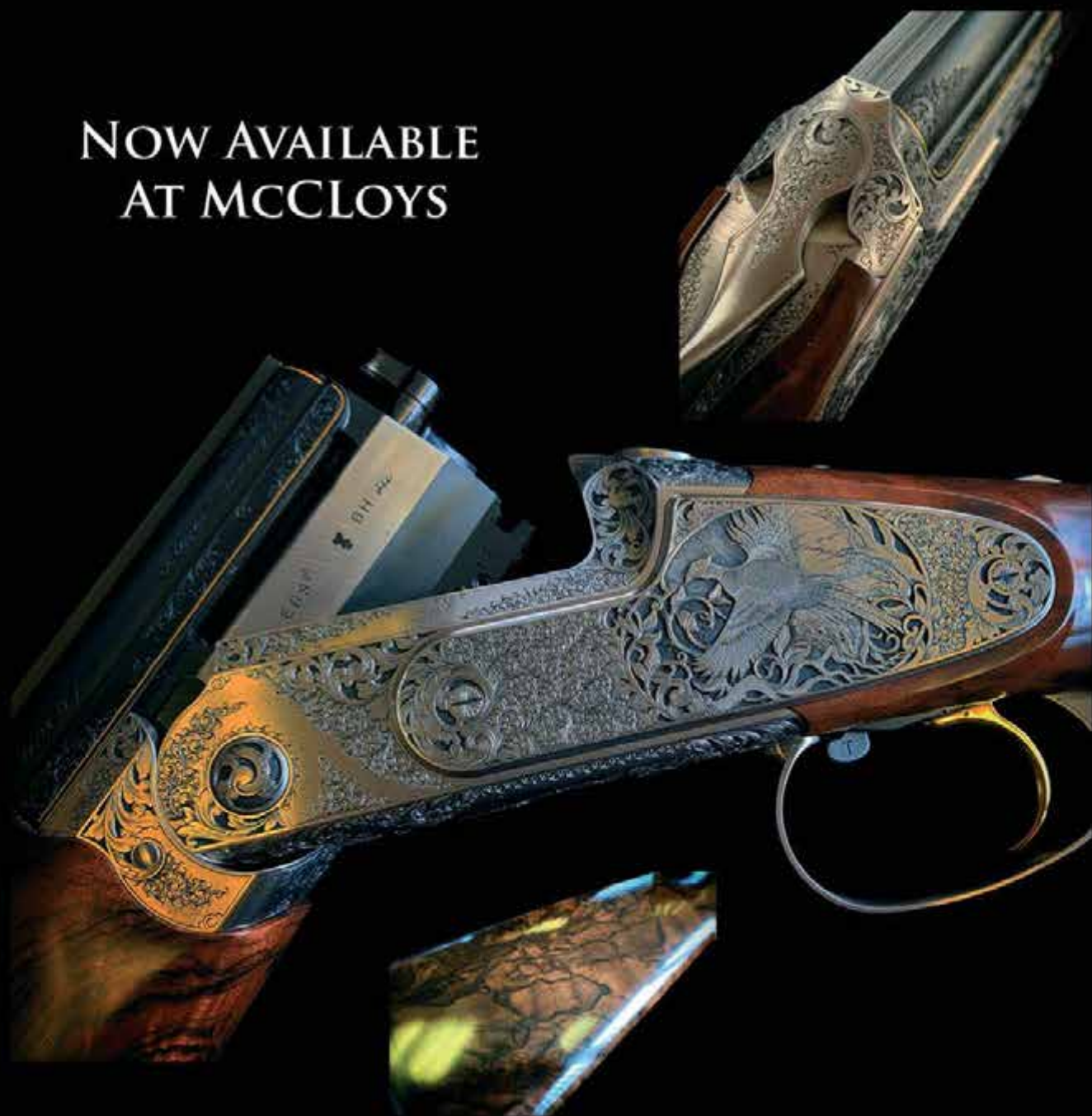
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Two Great Game Fairs planned for 2019 against the backdrop of the 2018 Shanes Castle Game Fair being shortlisted for two 'Tourism Oscars'



As the Great Game Fair team were putting the finishing touches to their plans for their 65th & 66th Game Fairs, they were delighted to discover that Northern Ireland's tourism chiefs have put Ireland's biggest game fair at Shanes Castle into the tourist 'Oscar' spotlight - not once but twice!

The Irish Game Fair & Fine Food Festival at Shanes Castle Antrim has been shortlisted for two major accolades within the prestigious NI Tourism Awards: NI Tourism Entrepreneur of the Year and NI Food & Drink Experience of the Year.

These Awards recognise and reward excellence, best practice and innovation in tourism, famously one of Northern Ireland's fastest-growing business sectors and this year's gala ceremony will crown a year in which the region celebrated attracting a record number of visitors.

2018 has been a hugely successful year for the Irish Game Fair too, as it marked a glittering ruby anniversary, and celebrated the fortieth anniversary of this unique concept to Ireland with record breaking crowds from around the world at Shanes Castle.

Looking forward to the finals of the NI Tourism Awards, to be held on 30th May in Armagh Palace

Demesne, Game Fair Director
Albert Titterington said:

"We have always strived to offer families the opportunity to fully enjoy countrysports and the rural way of life in a glorious rural setting.

"I am delighted to see the work of Great Game Fairs and its organising team so publicly recognised, and in turn the contribution the countryside makes particularly within the context of our tourism economy.

"The Irish Game Fair at Shanes Castle showcases Northern Ireland's uniquely precious heritage of country sports, pursuits and past-times, living history and our wonderful artisan food and drink sector on a world stage.

"As attendance levels demonstrate, there is massive interest and our Fairs attract increasing numbers of international participants, competitors, exhibitors and visitors.

Last year, our Shanes Castle event commanded massive media attention, including coverage in the Daily Telegraph and in Delicious food magazine which boasts a circulation of 65,000 readers and 756,000 facebook followers.

Positive focus on Trip Advisor created more interest worldwide, while the Fair was screened to around 10million UK audience by two BBC Farmers Country Showdown programmes and also brought to the attention of international audiences via the Fieldsports Channel.

Far from resting on its corporate laurels, the organisers will host their sixty-fifth fair, The Irish Country Lifestyle Festival at Galway Racecourse, Ballybrit over the weekend of 15 and 16 June, while



Living history re-enactments

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The Irish Game Fair & Fine Food Festival

WHERE TOWN & COUNTRY MEET

Shanes Castle, Antrim

Saturday 29th & Sunday 30th June 2019

The Irish Game Fair & Fine Food Festival celebrates its 41st anniversary as the award winning event of choice for families who enjoy the Irish countryside and a country lifestyle

- An action packed Game Fair programme of international country sports competitions and displays with lots of 'have a go' activities and fantastic prizes
- The International Year of the Salmon fishing attractions including the DAERA 'Put & Take' Fishery for children
- A huge Living History Village with Encampment & thrilling battle re-enactments including Medieval Jousting
- An Award Winning Fine Food & Craft Festival including game & fish cookery demos
- A huge tented village of quality trade stands including country clothing, homes, gardens and cars & 4X4s
- Lots of entertainment & educational activities for children
- With our new Irish Country Lifestyle Festival, Galway Racecourse, Ballybrit (15 & 16 June) The perfect platforms for businesses with country lifestyle products or services



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or in the Irish Countrysports & Country Life magazine www.countrysportsandcountrylife.com



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planning is already at an advanced stage for the 2019 annual Irish Game Fair and Fine Food Festival, to be held at Shanes Castle, Antrim on 29 and 30 June.

Both 2019 events will feature a rich mix of top quality international standard country sports events with unrivalled prize funds; superb Living History encampments and re-enactments from Living History Ireland and the Knights of the North jousting team; a huge tented village of trade stands featuring guns, tackle, clothing and in fact everything to 'buy into' the country lifestyle, a huge range of have-a-go activities for the



Peter Gott
whole family including a children's games area, archery, air rifle shooting;

non stop entertainment in three arenas; animals galore from ferrets to falcons and a 'put & take' fishery for children sponsored by DAERA Fisheries Division (complete with a very 'fishy' leprechaun)!

There are many new trade stands in the tented villages and once again working with FoodNI we have had to extend the Fine Food & Craft Festival which now really is a 'show within a show'. Once again this Festival will feature the inimitable Peter Gott, from the fells of Cumbria with his wild boar and game pies and superb range of lamb, pork and bacon products joined by many local artisan producers of everything from beer to buns!

The Fair in the ROI is supported by Galway City Council and in NI by TourismNI and Antrim & Newtownabbey Council and we think it far to say that both fairs will bring great entertainment and significant economic benefits to their host locations. To see the Fair preview video go to <https://player.vimeo.com/video/312929724>



(Above left and left)
DAERA sponsored
'Put & Take Fishery'
Featuring
'Larry the Leprechaun'

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The Irish Game Fair & Fine Food Festival

Shanes Castle, Antrim



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Another Great Food Festival at the our Country Lifestyle Festival, Galway Racecourse 15/16 June 2019

Canine Spectacular at the Great Game Fairs of Ireland

The Great Game Fairs of Ireland have 'pulled out all the stops' to deliver Ireland's top working dog event at Shanes Castle on the 29th & 30th June and a great introductory event at Galway on the 15th & 16th June.

Gundogs

This year the format of the gundogs has changed with the international team events being rested for a year, to be replaced by domestic events with some of the best prize money in Ireland on offer. And this has and will attract individual international competition!

At Galway there is top prize money of €250 and €150 plus other prizes in the Red Mills Spaniel and Retriever events, while at Shanes Castle the Prize fund includes prizes of £500 and £250 for The Red Mills Spaniel Tests and £500 and £250 for the Feedwell Retriever Tests.

The Red Mills Irish International Gundog Team under the captaincy of

Willie Mc Gaughan will provide an international flavour with a superb quality gundog demonstration.

New for 2019 HPR – Hunt Point 'Revival'

For more than 20 years the Hunt Point Retrieve (HPR) section of the Ulster Gundog League (UGL) has seen little to no activity. This is about to change with a recent boost of enthusiasm from the ULG HPR committee, Jordan McCooe, Damien McCabe, Kieran Fox & Tony Duffy. The revival of this section is aimed at first and foremost promoting HPR breeds both in the North & across the Island of Ireland. The club will be hosting three events this year, two retrieving tests & a novice HPR Field Trial. All events & trials will be running under English Kennel Club rules.

The Irish Game Fair have kindly agreed to host the first retrieving test during this year's event at Shanes Castle. The HPR Retrieving Test will



HPR Trophy to be won outright sponsored by Irish Country Sports and Country Life magazine

be an all aged entry and will take place on the Saturday 29th June at 12.30 at Shanes Castle, Antrim. Entry forms will be available on the day & is open to all HPRs. If you own an HPR or have an interest in working HPRs please come along and support the revival of competitions for these great breeds. You will be more than welcome.

For further information search

#HPRUlsterGundogLeague on Facebook or contact the club at hprulstergundog@gmail.com

Other Canine Events

These include the Glandore Dog Training Club Agility Show and Demo, Horse & Hound displays, The Feedwell NI Gundog Field & Show Society Open Dog Show, The Gundog Rescue and Rehoming Gundog Scurry and the GR&R /Irish Country Sports & Country Life 'Estate, Shoot or Club of the Year' competition.

Photo by Jan Evans



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ENTRY FORM

COUNTRY SPORTS ESTATE, SHOOT OR GUNDOG CLUB OF THE YEAR – IRELAND'S MOST STYLISH GUNDOG EVENT!



Organised by Gundog Rescue and Rehoming at the Great Game Fairs of Ireland at the Irish Country Lifestyle Festival, Galway Racecourse Sunday 16 June and the Irish Game Fair, Shanes Castle, Antrim Sunday 30 June.

This is an event designed to let country sports enthusiasts show off their style and their dog and give the public a little cameo of a shooting



day and a chance to see well turned out sports people and a good range of gundogs.

Based on a three person shoot, estate or club team smartly dressed in country clothing, tweeds or club attire with at least three well behaved gundogs one of which must carry out a simple gundog task – a retrieve, a demonstration of quartering or even pointing/setting. Teams will be judged on the smartness of the handlers' dress, the turnout of the dogs and the competence of one dog at a gundog test.

There will be heats at Galway and Shanes and the final will also take place at Shanes Castle. The members of each winning team in



the heats will win a Crystal Clock, a year's subscription to Irish Country Sports and Country Life magazine and a quality tweed dog bed from <https://thesheepishdog.com/>

The overall winners will be presented with the 'Shoot of the Year Perpetual Trophy'. Other 'spot prizes' will be announced later.



Entry Fee will be £30 per team going to GR&RH with each team member getting two FREE tickets to the relevant fair. Entries should be made to: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/584044518356131/>

To Gundog Rescue and Rehoming:

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Shoot or Gundog Club of the Year Entry.

Team Name:

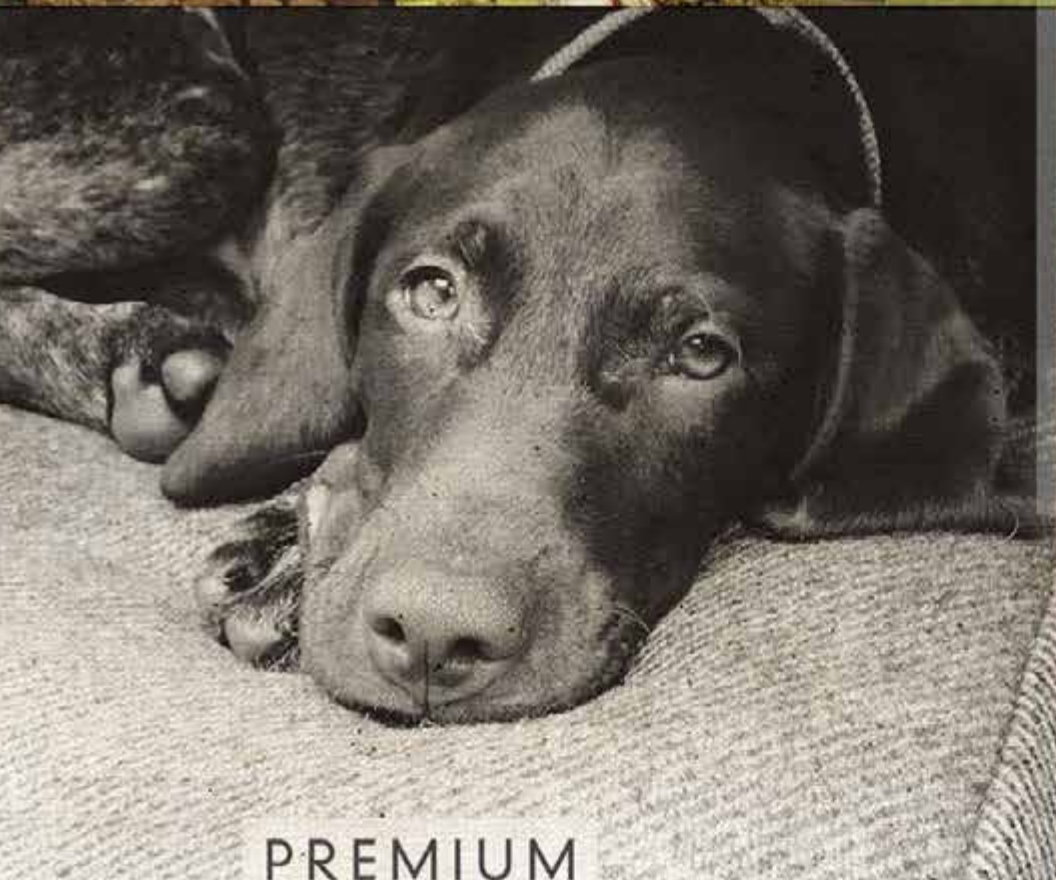
Team Contact:

Address for correspondence (including fair tickets) :

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The 31st ANNUAL ALL IRELAND CHAMPIONSHIPS - Ireland's premier working dog events – with the best prizes for the most prestigious competitions

The Irish Game Fair not only hosts the 31st All Ireland Terrier, Whippet & Lurcher Championships in racing (Saturday) and showing (Sunday) open to all comers, but also Ferret Showing & Racing and 5 International pre-qualified championships.



Scooby winning the Master McGrath for the 2nd year. (photo: Paul Morrison)

1. The FEEDWELL FIVE NATIONS WHIPPET CHAMPIONSHIP

2. RED MILLS FIVE NATIONS LURCHER CHAMPIONSHIP

3. RED MILLS FIVE NATIONS TERRIER CHAMPIONSHIPS

The judging format for the Five Nations Championships has changed from a three judge to a single judge format.

4. The REDMILLS MASTER MC GRATH LURCHER CHALLENGE



Winner Trophy for the Master McGrath - fantastic Juliana Trophy over 20 cm high to be won outright.

5. The Irish Country Sports & Country Life MICK THE MILLER CHALLENGE for Traditional HAIRY LURCHERS any size.



Trophy for the Mick the Miller - another fantastic vintage Juliana trophy to be won outright.

EACH CHAMPIONSHIP HAS £200 to the Winner £50 to the Runner Up plus other prizes and quality trophies. As the 31st ANNUAL All Ireland Championships (Showing & Racing) also take place this weekend (which are open all) qualifiers can have a real opportunity to compete for titles and prizes with the best of Irish dogs.

This year there is a special ALL IRELAND UNDER 22" CHAMPIONSHIP RACE.



Special Under 22" Winners Trophy

For full details of classes and prizes for the Terrier, Lurcher & Whippet Show at the Irish Country Lifestyle Festival Galway, Sunday 16th June and the All Ireland Terrier, Whippet & Lurcher Championships and International Championships at the Irish Game Fair, Shanes Castle 29th & 30th June see the competition section of www.irishgamefair.com

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50 Bird Sporting Shoot

1st prize Saturday: Huglu HT14 12g U/O

sporter gun sponsored by Gowen & Bradshaw



Huglu

2nd prize Saturday €150.00

3rd prize Saturday €75.00

1st prize Sunday Blaser F16 – sponsored by Lakeland Sports

Blaser



2nd prize Sunday €200.00

3rd prize Sunday €100.00

2 Person 50 bird flush

1st prize Saturday 500 game shells

1st prize Sunday 500 game shells

50 Bird Ladies Competition

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Equestrian Extravanzas at Great Game Fairs of Ireland

The Great Game Fairs of Ireland have always led the way in Ireland for their working dog, shooting and fishing competitions, but this year the fairs in Galway Racecourse, 15/16 June and Shanes Castle, Antrim will have a number of quality equestrian displays. Horse and hounds, medieval jousting, horse drawn vehicles and even dancing horses will take centre stage in the main and 'country sports in action' arenas.



Medieval Jousting

Twice a day, the Knights of the North from the borders of Scotland will 'headline' the Living History aspect of both fairs with exciting 'full on' jousting with the clash of lance and sword on shields as knights clash at high speed in the main arena <https://www.lesamisdonno.com/showreels>

Dancing Horses

Derek O'Byrne White and his Western Riding team from the Cochise Stud in County Offaly will demonstrate not only the serious side of Western Riding with his European Championship horses including the tight control of the horses but also the entertaining 'line dancing' skills of the horses and some of the team! <https://www.facebook.com/cochisestud/>

(Right) The Cochise Stud line-up for arena action.



Horse & Hounds

Horse and hound and beagle displays are always popular with the country sports crowd including the hunts allowing the children into the arena to mingle with the hounds.

New for this year

The Hungarian Horseback Weapons Display

Hungarian husband and wife team Zoltan and Ari Foldvari will put on a fast moving and very exciting display of Zoltan using a variety of weaponry on horseback. Re-Creating the historical equestrian and weapon links associated with the Scythians-Celts and Huns (from VIII-X century and XVI-XVIII. century) Zoltan, in appropriate flamboyant costumes, demonstrates the horseback and ground use of 12 different weapons including lance, axe, sable, sword, whip, bow, hammer etc. See an example of his show at <https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B7f-tC4FIan9cFB6N2o4OHp0R3M/view>





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New For This Year.... Whip and Collar Driving Club

From its formation in 2013 the Whip and Collar Driving Club has soared to success primarily with its flagship show held annually on May Day Bank Holiday, this year on Monday, 6th May 2019 at the magnificent Portmore Equestrian Centre. The club is pleased to announce new sponsorship evolving which is an enormous boost to the club. We also have affiliated with the Donkey Breed Society Northern Ireland for the first time which is great news and we as a club are very appreciative of their continual support and helping hand given by our donkey friends. The judge for the donkey's classes was Mrs Joanne Parrett from England, who is well known in the donkey circles having not only been showing but judging donkeys for quite a period.

The traditional cob classes were judged by local lady Lisa Doherty who also needs no introduction to the cob exhibitors, as Lisa has a vast first hand knowledge of these superb cobs. The judge for the rest of the classes was Mr Andrew Hamilton-Rhodes, who has exhibited immensely on the mainland and to have someone of Andrew's calibre judge our show was quite an



Thomas Clarke driving his Friesian accolade.

This year we have had a very kind invitation from the All Ireland Game Fair at Shanes Castle Antrim on Saturday 29th June 2019, for a display of traditional horse drawn vehicles and to see first-hand the natural companionship between man and his horse. This is a marvellous opportunity to join us in what is guaranteed to be an interesting and entertaining day set in the breath-taking surroundings of the Castle. There will be excellent prizes on offer for those displaying and is an opportunity for families to

participate in a range of events organised on the day by the Game Fair.

The Whip and Collar Driving Club would like to thank the Great Game Fairs of Ireland for this extremely kind invitation to join in at Shanes Castle. A special word of thanks is owed to our esteemed club member Philip Titterington who has worked tirelessly for the club and was a great help in obtaining this invitation from The Game Fairs. Philip's brother Albert Titterington is the Marketing and Planning Director for the Great Game Fairs and has a lifetime experience and commitment in furtherance of all country sports.

For further details follow us on Facebook or contact the Secretary Paul Trimble 07803191766



Joe McAleese driving Pinky.

***New For This Year...
Donkey Breed Society
to make debut appearance
at Shanes Castle Game Fair***

The Donkey Breed Society was originally formed in the UK in 1967 and was granted charitable status in 1970. The aims of the society were to promote the donkey as a working and companion animal and to improve the care, health and welfare of all donkeys. About 10 years ago the Donkey Breed Society [N. Ireland Region] was created when the Donkey Breed Society divided into nine regions with N. Ireland becoming one of these, along with six English regions, Wales and Scotland. All the regions are coordinated by a central Council.

The Donkey Breed Society [NI] concentrated initially on in-hand showing and driving but in recent years this competitive aspect has become less popular and the donkey of today is more likely to be seen in a variety of roles demonstrating just how multitasked and versatile the donkey can be. Many donkeys do not leave their field or yard very often but still provide a reminder of "the old times" and are wonderful pets and companions. Their docile nature and "laid back" attitude towards life has been utilised in recent years with the development of the donkey as a therapy animal for individuals with a range of physical and psychological disabilities. Their calming influence has led to them often being grazed with horses and the famous Irish race horse Arkle, never

went anywhere without his donkey companion. Donkeys are frequently seen at religious events such as Palm Sunday and Nativity services because of their biblical connections.

Although today the donkey is usually seen as a pet or companion animal, historically in Ireland, it was a working animal. It was known as the "poor man's horse" and this title may partly explain the lack of respect given to the donkey on some occasions. However, in areas such as the west of Ireland, it was the only animal that could access some of the more remote areas of mountain and bog and was therefore indispensable to the people trying to scrape together an existence in such difficult terrain. Because of the dependence of some of the poorer areas of Ireland on the donkey, the animal gradually became regarded as part of Ireland's history. But this is only true of recent history, as the donkey was only introduced into Ireland about five hundred years ago.

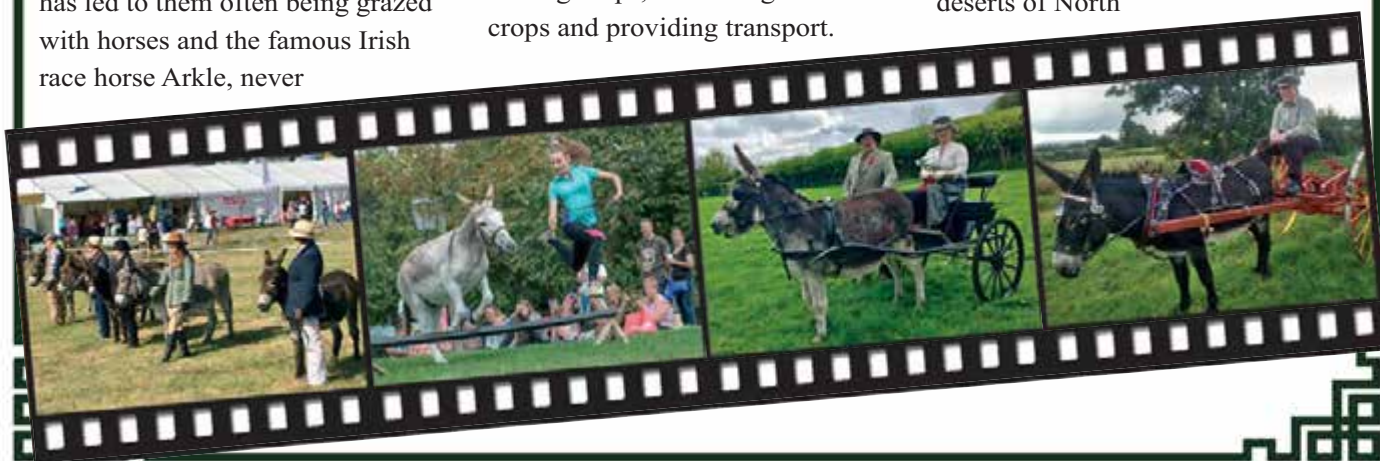
However it was only five hundred years ago that donkeys were introduced into Ireland by English army units but as time passed, they began to be accepted as a "native" animal. During the First World War many Irish horses were sold for use in the war effort and again replaced by donkeys who continued the traditional ways of working the land in preparation for sowing crops, harvesting these crops and providing transport.

***Part and parcel of
Irish rural life***

Donkeys are a traditional part of Irish and rural life. The main roles that donkeys played were clearing rocky fields, moving turf from bogs, ploughing, making ground ready, transporting people and goods, grinding corn and finally for recreation and as family pets. After the advent of motorised transport and tractors meant that donkeys have gradually become less important as working animals, but for much of the twentieth century, parts of Ireland remained in relative poverty. Interestingly, a report by the Department of Agriculture (DARD) (1971), "Still depended on donkeys for some of the traditional tasks that needed doing around the farm." With Ireland joining the EU in 1974 and changes in agricultural policies and rural investment, donkeys became less important and began to be seen more as pets.

However while traditional agricultural practices have changed considerably as a result of modernisation and globalisation, donkeys still play apart in providing for the livelihoods of many small-scale farmers. Their roles differ from country to country and from farm to farm but in general, donkeys assist in increasing farmer's productive potential and apply a positive contribute to their well-being.

The donkey's origins are in the deserts of North





Africa and Asia. Gradually, during the Greek and Roman Civilisations the donkeys migrated, as working animals, from the Middle East through Southern Europe and reached Britain in the first century with the invading Roman Legions carrying the pots and pans and other everyday essentials for the soldiers. The donkey became part of normal working life carrying packs, pulling carts, ploughing and working the land. Although they became naturalised into their working role in Britain it is important not to forget the donkey's desert origins and they are vulnerable to our cold, wet climate and therefore need shelter.

In the third world countries such as Ethiopia and Israel, donkeys play a significant part in the day to day incomes of large families. Donkeys are used regularly for bringing bricks out of the kiln, to make ground ready for crops and to carry heavy loads to and from different destinations. Donkeys are renowned for their sure footedness and their

ability to transverse rocky domain and tight pathways.

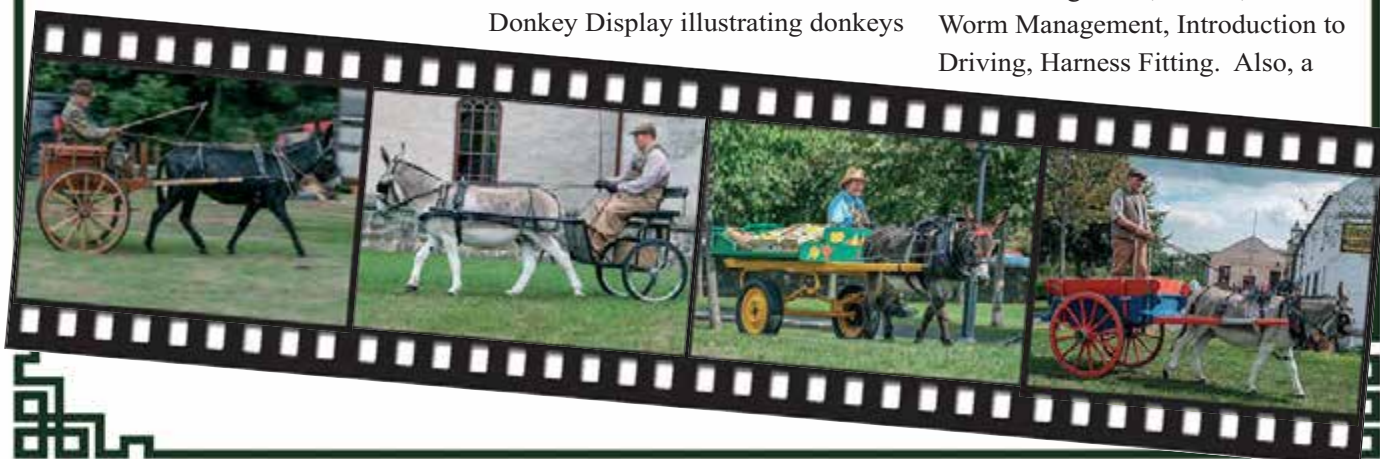
To date, The Donkey Breed Society NI members use many of their donkeys simply to harrow an area of ploughed ground and use implements such as a turnip sower to plant seeds and a donkey drawn roller to compress the soil into the ground. In doing so, this allows us to reinstate history and relive those days gone by whilst building a truly unique relationship with our donkeys. The bond farmers and owners had and have with their animals is something to be desired as was the way of life where there were no mobile phones or internet. The world seemed more peaceful then with a much slower place of life. Of course, there were hard times too but, in this day and age there is a lot to be said about 'those good auld days gone by'!

Traditional Working Donkey Display

Over the last few years the Donkey Breed Society [NI] has put together a Traditional Working Donkey Display illustrating donkeys

working in this traditional way and featuring many examples of the old agricultural implements which have been collected and sympathetically restored to working condition. Their display also demonstrates the donkey's role as a pack animal carrying turf creels and other produce in areas not easily reached by road. On many occasions the display can exhibit a complete range of donkey drawn private and trade driving vehicles. These can be seen on display at different shows, Walk, Ride and Drives organised by the society around the north and south of Ireland at community and private venues.

Furthermore, The Donkey Breed Society NI provides a range of Training Days throughout the year for all ages and needs and they are available to members and non-members. These training days are a great tool in helping people to get to know their donkey whilst gaining information about their welfare and needs. Our training days include Getting to know your Donkey, Handling your Donkey, Pasture and Field Management, Health, Care and Worm Management, Introduction to Driving, Harness Fitting. Also, a





new training course has now become available in the form of Long-reining. This course is ideal for those who wish to start the journey to driving their donkey. Furthermore, it's a great way to meet new people and learn new things and be part of practical demonstrations. You do not need a donkey to take part in these sessions. So why not get in touch to find out more and check out the dates for your diary!

The Donkey Breed Society NI members and friends of the donkey's aims are to raise the profile of the donkey with other active members. We support shows, festivals, community events and hold demonstrations with other members of the society. We take part in the Horse Skills and Donkey Planting Day at The Ulster Folk and Transport Museum, Cultra County Down, hold two DBSNI Championship Shows one at Castlewellan Show and the other at The Ulster Folk and Transport Museum Cultra. Also, the society has recently affiliated with The Whip and Collar Club and exhibit alongside the magnificent horse drawn carriages. These events are received well by everyone

involved giving both the public and ourselves a chance to interact with each other, ask questions, here day gone by stories all with the donkey in the middle listening attentively! In doing, so allows a range of agricultural implements and driving carts to be on display and demonstrate their uses in front of the public bringing life back to the good old days when donkeys played an influential part in the farming society.

Recently, the Donkey Breed Society NI attended Mullahead Ploughing Championships near Portadown in February. We had a fantastic turnout of donkeys working together as a team to break up the soil ready for planting. There was a wide variety of working implements demonstrating how donkeys have played a significant role in the agricultural world for many centuries here in Ireland, the UK and further afield. It's all about having a go!

The Donkey Breed Society NI has been kindly invited to the Game Fair at Shanes Castle in Antrim for their two day event on Saturday

29 June and Sunday 30 June to exhibit their Traditional Working Donkey Display. We are very excited about attending this event for the first time and look forward to displaying at it. I think some members have their bags packed already! Come along and see the fantastic display of donkey drawn vehicles and working implements in action.

If you would like to find out more about The Donkey Breed Society NI and how you can get involved please visit our Facebook page: The Donkey Breed Society NI, on our webpage <http://www.donkeybreedsociety.co.uk> or contact the club secretary on 07719270954 based in County Down. Its worth noting that you don't need a donkey to get involved. We are always looking for volunteers to help out at events. We are a vibrant, fun and welcoming society all brought together by one thing.....our love and passion for our very special long-eared friend....The Donkey!





Italian Guns, Italian Foodstuffs, an Italian Gundealer & Restaurateur and Michael Collins



It is always a pleasure to visit Francesco Morelli of Casale2000 in Cashel either at his gunshop, a veritable ‘Aladdin’s Cave’ of sporting, products many, as one would expect, with an Italian ‘flavour’. But on this occasion we had arranged to meet at his restaurant in the town to discuss his participation in the two Great Game



Fairs of Ireland, this time not just with his great range of guns, archery and other sporting equipment and clothing but his new range of fine Italian food products imported through his commercial

interests in Italy under the brand Casato Morelli.

Francesco’s son Piero Angelo Morelli, a very fine chef, who knows the importance of good natural ingredients will head up this operation which will display a range of fine authentic Italian foodstuffs such as various formats of pasta, hemp seed oil, cheeses and even hemp beer in the Fine Food Pavilions in Galway and Shanes

Castle. Peiro and Francesco are keen to meet potential distributors North & South.

Francesco will also have his well stocked stand for his sporting products where there are always bargains to be had.

And with his typical generosity

Francesco has sponsored two top quality Sabatti Rifles for prizes for the Clay Shooting at Galway and one for Shanes Castle.

And Michael Collins?

Francesco has always had a keen interest in Irish history and on his



A Sabatti Rifle

restaurant walls he features many photographs of the War of Independence including several of Michael Collins. He hadn’t known of my own interest in Irish history and thought, as a ‘Northerner’ I might object to having my photograph taken with Piero and Michael. He was surprised when I told him I had always had a grudging admiration for the very important role Michael Collins had played in the independence struggle and that I had recently found out that I had an, albeit tenuous link to his family through marriage!



Francesco’s caption was ‘Photo of the Maffiosi’

Francesco and Piero can be contacted for sporting goods or Italian food products at: Casale 2000 Ltd
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F.I.S.S.T.A.

ANGLERS LOOKING FORWARD TO SUMMER FAIRS AND SALMON

Our FISSTA members look to a new summer season and grilse run after a reasonable Spring salmon run, which some have seen improvements in despite reports to the contrary. For most of us, the serious fishing gets underway, and our minds turn to the possibilities of what that could bring as we cast our line once again. For some, they will catch very little, but for others it could be their best season ever. Nobody knows, until we try, and try we will, once again as generations before us have done. We wish all the best of luck.

Leaving aside the angling experiences we will have this season, some other events are standing out in our calendar of “upcoming things to do”. The top of our list has to be the Great Game Fairs of Ireland events in Galway on 15th & 16th June and Shane’s Castle in Antrim Town on 29th & 30th of June where we get to do our Galway thing all over again in the lovely castle setting on the banks of Loch Neagh.

While we will miss Birr Castle as a setting, we must acknowledge that more space is needed for such a major fair and Galway’s Ballybrit Racecourse setting will be a whole new experience

for us all. We must also look forward to the much earlier seasonal date in what for us could be classed as the home of the best game angling waters in the world where the richness of the angling culture will be evident from the start. More importantly, the visiting anglers to Corrib or Moy from abroad will be able to share this additional treat in Ballybrit this season.

The date of mid June is a big change for anglers to get accustomed to, but we welcome it for many good and productive reasons. While many of us in angling found the end of August in Birr was a ‘must attend event,’ the weekend was always difficult for families that may have already been back at school, or a clash with the business end of the sports calendar in Croke Park or elsewhere. Such difficult clashes can no longer happen with a June event, and the fishing tackle stands will find the anglers in a much better buying mood with the season just underway in the west of Ireland at that time.

Sadly, there are only 40 out of the 147 rivers open to taking a fish, and that is far too many closed rivers especially for the clubs working hard to get their waters back to normality. We strive to improve these salmon river figures as

state policy and management need our constant pressure to keep them alert.

For more information on all our work, please visit our stands at both fairs or log on to www.fissta.com or find us on facebook. The campaign priorities remain the same: open closed rivers and oppose new plans to increase fish farming. As always we will be taking appointments to discuss your club river situations with our experts during both fairs as always.

As regular exhibitors, we have found the Game Fair our best platform annually to meet and greet and give our message, and now the new Galway Ballybrit Fair will hopefully serve us in the same way to highlight our campaigns. And it is at these fairs that we raise great awareness and interest in what is being proposed by the state. We all know that time is of the essence and we ask you to assist your club in supporting our campaigns in whatever way you think will keep our angling way of life for future generations to enjoy. We thank the very brave organising team of the Great Game Fairs of Ireland for their hard work, help and support and look forward to the most successful and innovative show ever at Galway Racecourse and Shanes Castle.



Harry Makee from Bangor Co Down caught this lovely 11lb springer on the Foxford stretch of the Moy River in County Mayo

INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF THE SALMON KICKS OFF WITH HOPE

“Do you Need Me?” That is the latest unnecessary message to anglers that was printed on our salmon tags for 2019 by Inland Fisheries Ireland in their attempts to encourage an even higher catch and release rate. We as anglers on the river bank continue to keep supporting fishery staff who in general, do some good work whenever we see it. Sadly, that experience is all too rare, and that is why we are in constant conflict with the state authorities who are paid vast sums to protect and conserve our wild Atlantic salmon and sea trout. We have failed to convince our state services and government to take adequate action over the years and now the relevant Department admit to the international salmon community at NASCO that only

over 40 of our 146 designated wild salmonid rivers are open to taking a fish for 2019, or in another admission to NAASCO that only 11 of the 146 are “not at risk”, which indicates that the downward spiral continues the free-fall with no plans good or bad by IFI to address this decline to date.

On opening day of this season this year, the first salmon was caught once again on a Donegal River, but this time it was not the Drowes River. It was a ‘catch and release’ designated river that for the first time yielded ‘the first fish’ which under law could not be kept for the pot by the lucky angler Michael McCann but had to be returned as the Lough River was classified as ‘catch and release’ status.

This year has been designated as the International Year of the Salmon and it is the first time in salmon history that a

river with no surplus has yielded the first fish. It is hardly the best outcome for 2019 that we wanted, as this angler catching the first fish of a season could not keep the prize and sadly, it is the shape of things to come in the future.

GOOD PROGRESS ON THE ISSUE OF SALMON MORTALITY IN THE FEEDING GROUNDS OF THE NORTH ATLANTIC

FISSTA are delighted to report that following our year long lobbying campaign, serious progress has been made at last to examine our claims or the hypothesis of Dr Jens Christian Holst that our post smolts are being predated on by mackerel in the feeding grounds of the North Atlantic. If Brexit has any silver lining for the salmon, it is that the EU fishing countries such as Ireland, who were due to lose 60% of their pelagic water off Scotland were suddenly blessed with a new count that increased their quotas for mackerel instead of the dramatic decrease they were last facing Christmas. Recently, some Norwegian fishermen observed postsmolts being eaten by mackerel in the bays of a small river in Norway. This report has been registered and recorded by the observers and will receive greater publicity in the coming months.

Normally, our salmon angling clubs and members read and observe all the scientific advice to monitor fishing stock trends regarding salmon and sea trout, but we have rarely had our attentions turned to mackerel and the pelagic sector until recently. That was after we published our Holst hypothesis around this time last year, when we took it in printed format to NASCO and campaigned for it to be tested by the scientific community. Since that time, correspondence and social media feedback on how the commercial fishing industry quotas were allocated by the scientists in ICES has greatly increased.

Earlier this year, the story dramatically changed as the Killybegs

Fishermen's Organisation among others recently reported in their April press statements. Before the Christmas recess, the CEO of the KFO Sean O' Donoghue stated that reductions in the pelagic quotas are disappointing but were flagged up from earlier in the 2018 year when ICES issued its advice for 2019. The 20 per cent reduction in mackerel is as a result of an ICES miscalculation when issuing advice; there will be a review of this advice early in 2019 and a reversal of this drastic cut should be made.

Well, that ICES scientific review took place in February, and thankfully our scientific colleague from Norway, Jens Christian Holst managed to attend with his fresh thoughts and data that seems to have assisted the process greatly. Many scientists agreed, that, such a review was required at the recent ICES Inter-Benchmark Mackerel Report confirmed that from this meeting it was agreed that there was a huge upwards revision in stock size agreed. The KFO stated that the previous ICES assessment and advice issued at the end of September last year indicated that the stock had been falling from a peak in 2011 and that is was now below the reference points. The ICES recent inter-benchmark report finds this is no longer the case with the stock size still increasing in size until 2015 and remaining well above the reference points since then. The stock size in the report is estimated to be now at 4.16 million tonnes compared to 2.35 million tonnes in the advice issued last year. Furthermore, there has been a very large upwards revision on recruitment and a downwards revision in fishing mortality.

To monitor the development of the mackerel stock, the ICES assessment uses data from a number of sources including information on catches and also from a number of survey which provide a wide variety of data including: an estimate of stock size from the egg survey that is carried out every three years; information on recruitment strength from annual groundfish surveys; and a summer trawl

survey in northern waters.

Another important source of information used by the assessment is from tagging experiments. Each year, thousands of individual mackerel are tagged during their migration north to summer feeding grounds. Using detectors installed in processing facilities, catches are screened and the number of tagged fish counted. There are however, significant challenges when using this data. Factors such as how fish that have been tagged mix with the rest of the population, how they respond to being tagged (a certain number are likely to die due to the tagging operation) and the efficiency of detection of tagged fish all require careful consideration. Additionally, if the information on numbers of tags caught is to be useful, it is very important that the total volume of fish scanned in the factory is known.

When running the annual assessment, there are a number of checks that are carried out by the scientists. One such check investigates the sensitivity of the assessment to each of the individual data sources. The result of an assessment should reflect the information available from all the sources of data and should not be overly dependent on one particular survey.

In 2018, it was noted that the assessment had become particularly sensitive to the tagging data. Despite extensive checks the working group found no error in the data or the assessment settings and so followed the procedure as agreed at the most recent benchmark in 2017. However, the group felt that additional work should be carried out and recommended an inter-benchmark, ideally before the 2019 assessment exercise. An inter-benchmark is an exercise that is designed to focus on a single issue of concern, as was the case here. This proposal requested by the Coastal States was supported by ICES and this work was completed at the end of March. During the inter-benchmark, the tagging data was thoroughly reviewed.

With several years of data now

available it was possible to look into it in greater detail than previously. A number of things were noticed that indicate that there may be issues with the mixing of fish of certain ages and also that the scanned catch in the early years (where only Norwegian catch was scanned) was different from that in recent years, in terms of where the catch was taken. As a result, it was decided to trim some of the data out until a greater understanding of these issues is available. The majority of the tags detected are still included but when the trimmed data is included in the assessment the resulting revision in stock perception is substantial.

We are greatly encouraged by this new development to revise the quotas and embrace the hypothesis published by Dr Holst last year on the underestimated population of mackerel. We can only hope that the post smolt predation and overgrazing part of the hypothesis is tested very soon as well.

GALWAY MARINE PARK FOR SALMON FARMING REJECTED BY PLANNERS

FISSTA have long been in battle with the unsustainable salmon farming policies of Udaras na Gaeltachta, the state body responsible for industrial development in the Gaeltacht areas of the west of Donegal, Galway, Kerry, Cork, Meath and Waterford. A recently proposed planning application was objected to by FISSTA and our sister colleagues, Galway Bay Against Salmon Cages, which resulted in Udaras failing to win planning permission for an office because of environmental concerns.

FISSTA Chairman Paul Lawton welcomed the decision to reject the application stating 'outdated salmon farming technology was being proposed while multinational companies in Norway and America were light years ahead using more sustainable technologies to produce the same product onshore. Perhaps, it is time for the applicants to research the developing trends to build more



Protest at Bord Bia by veteran campaigners (l-r) Brian Curran, Galway Bay Against Salmon Cages, Billy Smyth FISSTA & GBASC and Alec O' Donovan Save Bantry Bay (Against Salmon Cages)

sustainable production units that will keep diseases and pollution onshore where they will have to comply with waste and disease regulations.'

Udaras CEO Micheal O' hEanaigh stated in the Connacht Tribune that they were 'fully intent on following through with the effort to establish the Marine Park.' FISSTA have intervened to advise Udaras na Gaeltachta that if their plan was revamped to reflect the spirit and strategy of the Norwegian roadmap which was endorsed by Marine Harvest in 2017, then the new park could become an innovation that could lead rather than follow the netcage disasters that are dotted around our coast at present.

LOW CONFIDENCE AND TRUST IN IFI FUNDING PROGRAMMES

The news that IFI have spent €160,000 on four new electric jeeps was released around the same time that €136,000 had been allocated to salmon enhancement projects for 2019. Last year, the exact same €136,000 was sent back to state coffers at the end of 2018

as unspent due to the low 'take up' by clubs who fear they would be unpaid if they undertook the work. While we all agree that we must tackle the climate change issues, paying out such money at the expense of salmon habitat enhancement projects reflects on the short sightedness of a state body that needs fish for them to justify their existence in the future.

We tried to engage with various state departments on the serious failure to pay many clubs their outstanding grants by IFI that has led to the collapse in applications by clubs to the various schemes to enhance salmon and sea trout habitat programmes. FISSTA are in contact with a number of clubs who await outstanding grants and have been delayed for various reasons under the word "governance" which is leading to serious hardship to all angling clubs concerned. Ciaran O' Kelly from the Boyne Catchment Anglers Association's has done trojan work in campaigning for a return to the previous payment process that ran much more efficiently than the present failed system.

The refusal of central government to

allocate funding to the strategy for two years in a row is significant and it may be that central government could be very concerned with the management of the fund. For example, IFI have organised 9 funding workshops around the country. The entire costings when staff time and expenses and overnight accommodation is totalled we think might not be far from the €136,000 they have allocated.

Such decisions as these, like the decision to highlight the change over to green cars from diesel for double the money may be commendable, if their previous decision to purchases of over 100 diesel jeeps was not mentioned in the same statement.

A measure of the level of disillusion felt by anglers can be seen in the 2018 funding call, where only one stakeholder funding award was approved in the Salmon Conservation stamp fund and two in the Midland licence fund. Obviously, there was none in the NSAD stream as that fund was cut back. Could it be that we have a situation in which there are more IFI project animators than stakeholder

projects with a wage bill now much higher than the NSAD fund?

FISSTA and our members question why no club re-applied from the 2017 funding awards. To make matters worse, the 6 project animators appointed last year to clear the way for voluntary club input to deliver the projects have actually become a logjam in the system under 'governance' headings that most angling members have neither the will nor the voluntary time to waste with a question over whether they will pay or not. The losers in this debacle is our salmon habitat and the projected 1,800 new jobs that have stalled to date.

Many believe the strategy is doomed as it has lost the angling public and anger is at high levels as all clubs want is to get back to carrying out conservation projects like the €19m. delivered twenty years ago by a much reduced CFB development staff than at present. This will be our message once again to the upcoming IFI funding consultation workshops where anglers will get the chance to voice their frustration at the disconnect between anglers and upper IFI management.

FISSTA SAY TEST THE HOLST HYPOTHESIS NOW!

According to a recent Irish Times article detailing the findings of a Scottish salmon report, it was stated that Ireland is experiencing a parallel decline in wild salmon as Scotland, where numbers caught are at their lowest since records were first compiled, according to chief executive of Inland Fisheries Ireland Dr Ciarán Byrne. Numbers of the fish here peaked in the mid-1970s, when about 1.7 million returned. Today, returns are estimated at some 200,000. The reported catch is between 28,000 and 30,000, confirmed Dr Byrne, with 8,000 caught commercially and the rest from recreational angling. "We are deeply concerned about salmon abundance levels," he said."

Reacting to a Scottish government report published yesterday indicating survival of wild salmon is "at crisis

point," Dr Byrne said the same factors are affecting populations in Ireland – mortality at sea, climate change including rising water temperatures, and sea lice arising from fish farming.

The easy answer would be to blame sea lice and fish farming which can be significant factors in a particular year, but the reality is more complex. The biggest overriding problem is "marine mortalities," which have reached 96 per cent. For every 100 salmon smolts leaving Irish rivers, up to 30 used to return to spawn. In recent years that figure was "just three or four". Marine survival peaked

in or around 1986, with approximately 31 of every 100 which set out on the perilous journey from an Irish river to the Atlantic returning. Dr Byrne said it is likely that changes in ocean temperatures, food availability and predators are also having a dramatic effect. But such factors are largely uncontrollable, he said."

While it was known from Norwegian fish scientist Jens Christian Holst since 2001 that sea mortality and predation were significant, no research was done to find out more. FISSTA have argued that just because the problem is mainly at sea, is no reason to do nothing.

FIRST SALMON LICENCE REVOKED DUE TO ABUSES

Some salmon farmers under the stewardship of IFA AQUACULTURE have constantly ignored state orders to control their pollute to produce mismanagement. But sadly such abuses to most of the licences continue, despite our considerable protests and objections. One chink of light recently was the revocation of a licence by Mowi in Kerry while allegedly an even bigger abuse went without revocation on a smolt farm on the Tullaghbegley River in Donegal. How can injustice and damage to our wild salmon and water quality go unpunished.

We are indebted to Galway Bay Against Salmon Cages for this information from state sources which updates us that:

DCCAE and IFI orders accelerated harvesting at the following sites in Connemara and Donegal

Ardmore & Creevin Sites - DCCAE requires that accelerated harvesting should now be enacted at the Ardmore site due to the inability to control sea lice since November 2018;

Creevin site in Donegal Bay - DCCAE requires that accelerated harvesting should take place at this site before the onset of wild salmonid smolt runs;

Fraochoilean Site, Ballinakill Bay - DCCAE requires that accelerated harvesting should commence immediately at this site. DCCAE/IFI are concerned that fish with a pre-existing lice population may have been moved to this site in December / January and require confirmation of same;

Rosroe Site, Killary Harbour - Sea lice levels have increased progressively at the Rosroe site since November 2018 and DCCAE requires immediate action by DAFM to effectively control lice prior to the salmon and sea trout smolt run from the National Salmonid Index Catchment on the River Erriff.

DCCAE requires an urgent update on what action the Department of Agriculture Food and the Marine is taking to resolve these situations and a response to our requirements set out above, which relate to our statutory responsibilities for the conservation of salmon and sea trout.

It seems that the Department of Communications, Climate Action & Environment (DCCAE) has had to take the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine (DAFM) and the Marine Institute (MI) to task for failing in their statutory responsibility to protect wild salmon and sea trout from the unmanageable and out of control lice levels on salmon farms along the west coast but particularly from Donegal to Connemara. The seriousness of this situation can be ascertained by the DCCAE requiring an urgent update from the DAFM on what action the Department is taking to resolve these situations.



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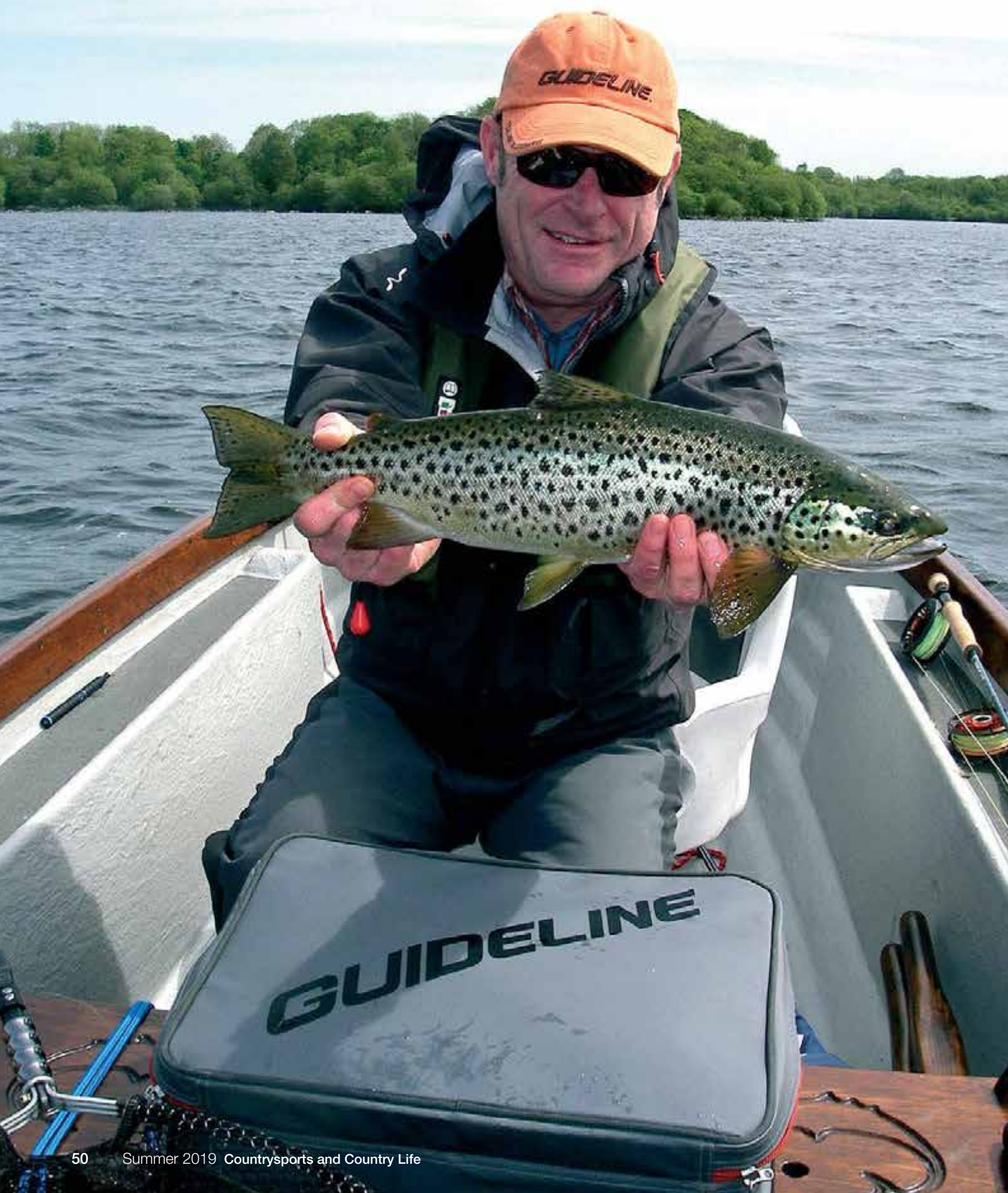


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By Stevie Munn

A Few For the Lough



At the time of writing, I have hardly wet a line so far this season, constant bad weather being the main factor. I have been kept busy lately by working at a few angling shows for Guideline in Scotland and Ireland but, with May fast approaching, I am starting to get excited as very soon I will be drifting with countless other anglers on some of Ireland's great limestone Loughs, in pursuit of wild brown trout.

I love all fly fishing on rivers for wild trout and salmon, but here in Ireland is something truly magical about the Mayfly. The freshly hatched dun has an almost fairy like quality, flitting and dancing on the waves it reminds me of Tinkerbell from J. M. Barrie's Peter Pan. Or watching the spinners mating dance above an island on a wild lough, sometimes there are so many it's like smoke rising from the trees. It is a truly fantastic and fascinating time.

The Mayfly is loved by anglers and trout alike, but the name Mayfly can be very misleading as the Mayfly season can begin on some Irish loughs as early as the middle of April. But normally the middle of May into the first or second week of June is the time, although I have seen and heard of hatches happening as late as September. So it's always a good idea to have a few Mayfly patterns with you, no matter what time of year you go afloat, as you just never know you might come across an unsuspected hatch with trout feeding on them.

I have put together below as selection of great patterns which are fished by some top fly tiers and anglers during the Mayfly season and I hope they work for you also.

Gerry's Dabbler - dressed by Stevie Munn

Hook: Partridge size 10 or 12 wet fly supreme hook. I also



dress this fly on a Partridge size 10 or 12 Dry fly supreme hook as at times I like a lighter fly to be fished on the top dropper or bob fly.

Silk: Copper Semperfli Nano
Tail of pheasant cock fibres
Rib of gold or silver wire
Body of olive or gold glister dubbing (pearlescent dubbing from Veniard)

Body hackles of olive palmered
Collar hackle of blood red hen or soft cock.

Cloak of bronze mallard with very small jungle cock eyes, does not matter if it is split.

This fly was first given to me by a great friend and an excellent lough angler Gerry Teggart. Gerry has fished most of Ireland's big loughs, although the ones he fishes most, like me, are Sheelin, Erne and Melvin. I often spend a wonderful day in his company adrift on one of these magnificent jewels. The original Dabbler came about when two anglers discussed the dressing of another great Irish Lough pattern the Gosling. Like the Gosling, the Dabbler has many variants and this is one of my favourites.

Fishing dabbles, the fly is normally retrieved fast, or as we say pulled and then dabbled near the boat before the next cast is made. Although takes can happen at any time, I have found that the moment for a take is often on the first three pulls and then the dabble at the end of the retrieve, as frequently fish follow your fly. So get ready for the take just before you lift.

A little tip: it's often hard to hook

fish close to the boat as you lift your rod to dabble your fly, but if a strike cannot be made sometimes a well-timed roll cast can hook a fish. The first dabbles were developed by Donald McCLearn for fishing the loughs of Ireland in the competition scene in the 80s and 90s. There are many great dabbler patterns and no doubt there will be many more. I'm sure you will have your favourite, but this one is great throughout the season and really marvellous at Mayfly time.



SM May Updated - by Stevie Munn

Hook: 8 - 10 Partridge Wet Fly Supreme or for top dropper Partridge Dry Fly Supreme.

Silk: Semperfli Nano.

Tail: A few Strands of Pheasant Tail,

Rib: Red.

Body: A couple of turns Red Holo Tinsel, Yellow Flashabou or Lite Brite Dubbing

Body Hackle: Light /Med olive, Cock.

Wing: Primo Deer hair dyed Fl Chartreuse (a small pinch)

Collar Hackles: One or two turns of red GP feather with a Light Olive or Yellow English Partridge Hackle in Front.

Head: Hot orange or red.

This is my own pattern updated, which I have used in one form or other for years. It's a fly with its origins in the old gosling style of Irish lough flies and one that works well on Irish, Scottish and English loughs and rivers at Mayfly time. It

works very well on Lough Erne on the top dropper, pulled and then dabbled at the boat. It also works when fish are feeding on daphnia, when front hackles should be dressed long. It once caught 9 fish in not many more casts when fish were feeding of a localised hatch of Mayfly duns close to Eagle Point on Lough Erne.



Spent Mayfly - by lough angler Kevin Sheridan

Hook: B830 Size 10-12
 Butt: No 4 GloBrite
 Tail: Black Pheasant Tails
 Body: Raffia
 Body Hackle: Grizzle Saddle
 Front Hackle: Grizzle Cape
 Wings: Black Cock Cape Points

A pattern taken from another that Kevin had on a size 12 for the male spent fly. It's heavily hackle so it can be fished on a big wave. In Ireland it's most common to be fishing the patterns on a wave but, when there is a calm evening, have a pattern that doesn't have a body hackle as it sits better on the water.

When fishing the spent fly on calm conditions, patience is required and leaving it on the water longer than 10 minutes would be advised. On one particular evening I saw a trout come up to the fly only to turn away. I left the fly while having a cup of my favourite brew, only for a trout to take it. A well-known angler had told me he had left a fly on the water for 45 minutes when he noticed fish coming to the fly and moving away, only to return several times until it was it was fully confident.



Melvin UV Sparkle Octopus - by lough angler Mark Robinson

Kamasan B175 size 10
 Thread Uni 8/0 Red
 Tag Flat Gold tinsel
 Tail GloBrite Number 11
 Body Yellow UV dubbing
 Rib Small Oval gold tinsel
 Body Hackle, Paired Dark Olive and Golden Olive cock hackles palmered

Wing 2 Strands of Peacock Flashabou Accent
 1st Hackle Yellow Ring neck pheasant rump feather (2 Turns)
 Front Hackle Yellow Golden pheasant rump hackle

'The Melvin Octopus' was designed by the well-known Orkney angler Stan Headley in 1991. The original Golden Olive Seals fur in this pattern has been replaced by Yellow UV dubbing for added attraction. The secret to this pattern is not to over dress it, with 3 turns of the palmered hackles being plenty on a size 10 hook to allow light penetration to the dressing.

This is not only an effective pattern during a May Fly hatch, but also throughout the season. The fly would normally be fished on a cast of 3-4 flies and I've found it fishes well on any position of the cast. The fly tied with multi strands of a GloBrite No.7 floss (well brushed out) and incorporating a dyed Orange Hen hackle and a Golden Pheasant Rump feather dyed Sunburst, can be very effective when fishing the deeps targeting daphnia feeders. It has been a very

effective pattern for me on Lough Melvin, Lough Mask, Lough Corrib and Lough Erne, normally fished on an Intermediate or DI 3-5 line. Whilst designed namely for targeting Brown Trout, it can also be a great pattern for Rainbow trout both on large lakes and local trout fisheries. I would highly recommend this pattern to any angler when fishing the loughs in Ireland.

Remember while fishing in Ireland on her wild loughs. They can be very big and normally are very rocky and can be hazardous places when swept by the strong winds. A boatman/guide is the best guarantor of safety, but even so each angler in a boat should always wear a lifejacket. Anglers who go afloat without the aid of a boatman/guide should only do so with great care after taking local advice.

Stevie Munn

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

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Brown Trout on Soft Lures

Something different for early trout fishing.

The purists are going to hate this, but I have a stretch of a small river that the farmer lets me fish in return for some work. I know nobody else fishes it, so it is up to me how I choose to fish it. Early in the season trout are hungry after the exertions of winter and their feeding seems to be less selective than later on in the summer. At this time of year they are opportunistic and keen to take most offerings, certainly streamer flies and big nymphs work well, but so do the new wave of rubber lures.

These artificial baits are made to look like the creatures that occur naturally, only they are often in very unnatural colours. Small, paddletail minnows are my go to type for this sort of fishing, they are good for any kind of predator, not just for trout, but for chubb and perch too. I like the Daiwa Duckfin shads, they are beautifully made and I have several packets of them, enough to

last me a lifetime I would think! They are the largest I tend to use, smaller minnows on lighter jighead hooks are useful for shallower or slower water and sometimes the smaller lures work better, the trout have to be in an aggressive mood to take the larger duckfin shads, or you get a lot of missed takes as they harass rather than engulf the lure.

I started at the bottom of my stretch to work my way up. I don't wade this river, the banks are very high and steep in many places and the holes are too deep to wade, so I have to pick a few spots where I can get down the sandy banks to just above the water and fish methodically the water that I can cover.

Where the water runs in to a pool and the current is well defined I will start by casting close and working the lure jig fashion in the flow. Gradually I would extend my range, covering the water in a fan shape, but mostly casting across the current and allowing the lure to

swing around and up, the induced takes this invokes are savage. By starting close and working out wider you don't spook fish by playing a hooked one through their lie.

I do find keeping as low a profile as possible helps, as does a bit of wind to riffle the water, as this gives the fish more confidence even if it does make casting a bit more hazardous, especially with overhanging branches, but the weighted hooks are easier to cast than a lightweight fly in these conditions and you will lose fewer hooks. My preferred rod is a shorter one and I use an 8ft spinning rod for a casting weight of 5g-30grams. This actually casts a 2.5g jighead without any trouble and has the stiffness required for setting the hook. A rod that is too soft will result in many missed takes as the fish feels the hook but the rod yields before the hook can be set.

You don't need a fancy reel, but it is



Banks are high and steep and the holes are too deep to wade.

worth tuning the drag with Cal's drag grease to make it smooth and reliable, as the sudden, smash-and-grab takes from a trout in current can break light line if it isn't protected. I only use 6lb monofilament straight through and after knotting a lure clip on this is nearer 5lbs breaking strain.

These fish can really fight!

Of course the majority of the wild brown trout will be under 11lb, but this river has the odd 'horse' and I have wild brown trout of over 31lbs before, to say nothing of the occasional chub over 4lbs, so a little insurance built into your tackle is advisable, you never know when that fish of a lifetime is going to grab your lure and being badly prepared will only result in disappointment as the fish runs you into some alder roots or around another obstruction. I can't express too strongly how hard these fish can fight and while a fly line provides significant drag to help play the fish but with only fine monofilament cutting through the water the fight on spinning gear is even greater.

The first swim I use to dial myself in and get the line wet so future casts are more accurate. This particular pool is pretty featureless and so I can put a

longish cast down and across to get more line off the reel than I will use anywhere else, getting the tension correct on the spool and checking the drag is set to yield if a good fish takes. The line peeled off as my lure arced downstream and landed within a foot of the opposite bank, as it landed I flicked the bale arm over and started to retrieve. Almost immediately the rod lurched as

a fish grabbed at the lure, taking me by surprise but it didn't stick. A lesson learned, always expect a fish!

A lovely wild brown trout sporting a row of red spots along its flank

I moved upstream a few yards to where the current curves around an alder tree that grows out of the bank. My cast this time was upstream and across the flow. As I wound the lure back a trout pulled the rod round hard and the reel gave an inch or so of line. It gave me a good run around before I could bring it in and get it under control as it used the current to aid its fight. It wasn't a big fish by any means, about 10", but a lovely wild brown trout sporting a row of red spots along its flank. It had taken a green and black Kypoto lure about 4cms long mounted on a size 1 hook with 3g head. My first trout of 2019.

The next pool is on a deep bend and has a fallen tree trunk right in the middle, creating confused current and good cover for the fish to evade predators. I inched my way down the bank onto a little step on the bank. Casting is hindered by the alders on each side, but I could get a cast in



Small minnows are my go-to type for this kind of fishing.

behind the sunken tree where the current slacks. Almost before I flicked the bale arm over a fish came at the lure, I saw the flash of gold in the water and knew it was a big trout, but it had missed and so I had a second chance. I retrieved the lure and cast again, this time further downstream and retrieved up the edge of the current as close as I could to where the fish was lying. Sure enough, the fish hit the lure once more, properly this time and the rod hooped round and the reel actually sang as the fish tore downstream about 5 yards. Then it all went slack, I had lost it. I know where that fish lives now though and I shall try again another day in a week or so.

The next swim is a long smooth flow with easy access down sandy banks. The current runs in over a shallow bed of stones before fanning out into the deeper water. This time I changed to an orange lure, the sun was starting to get low and I find warmer colours work well. As I stood half crouched a kingfisher flitted in and perched in the alder about 5 yards away, before it saw me and flew on again piping its indignation. I love these encounters with nature while I hunt the river. I cast across into a slacker piece of current and started to bring the lure back across, as it swung in the current a fish hit and was properly hooked. I played it in, another glorious wild brown trout about 14" long, not a big fish by any standards, but a worthwhile capture from this river.

This type of fishing couldn't be easier, so for getting someone hooked on fishing it is ideal. Making it too difficult simply puts newcomers off and fly fishing clubs wonder why their memberships are dwindling! Get them to catch fish, then when they have caught the bug, bring them on to fly fishing. Commercially run fisheries around the country have realised this and now allow some lure fishing. If you have a youngster who wants to go fishing, can I suggest you try using a very light spinning rod outfit and small rubber lures, they will love it!



A lovely early season fish photographed and quickly slipped back.



Another selection if the minnows didn't work.



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Canney appeals to anglers to become citizen scientists as part of the National Salmon Scale Project

Salmon scales reveal mysterious life of salmon

Anglers who are willing to become citizen scientists are needed for a new National Salmon Scale Project says Sean Canney TD, Minister with responsibility for the Inland Fisheries sector.

Minister Canney said: “As we celebrate International Year of the Salmon, this project will help researchers understand the challenges which salmon are facing today. The project, which has been initiated by Inland Fisheries Ireland aims to collect vital information through scales taken from salmon and sea trout which are caught in Irish rivers and lakes and will contribute to international efforts to conserve wild salmon”.

Fish scales record the life history of a salmon and one scale can reveal a lot about the lifestyle and behaviour of the fish. Scales can tell scientists what age the fish is, how many winters it spent at sea, how many times it spawned, how slow or fast it grew, what it ate and how long it spent in the river before it went out to sea.

Scales can also reveal the general feeding area where the salmon travelled to in the ocean, whether it went to the Faroe Islands, the Norwegian Sea or all the way to West Greenland. Scales help scientists to understand the biology and ecology of Irish salmon and sea trout.

As part of the project, anglers are



asked to take a scale sample from a salmon or sea trout by gently scraping and removing approximately 20 fish scales using a clean knife. Anglers are then requested to post their samples to Inland Fisheries Ireland using the sample envelopes which will be made available to them. Scales can be removed from both harvested and catch and release fish. Sampling of fish for release should be handled carefully and fish should be only briefly removed from the water with every effort made to avoid injury or stress while weight should be estimated.

Information from salmon scales is used in setting conservation limits for Irish rivers. Conservation limits for each river are set based on the proportion of salmon who have spent one winter at sea and those that have spent multiple winters at sea. The ‘conservation limit’ for a

river represents the number of spawning salmon required to produce the next generation of salmon and this information helps inform angling regulations and management. Information from scales on multi sea winter salmon entering rivers in spring is also important for managing individual river stocks.

Dr Paddy Gargan, Senior Research Officer at Inland Fisheries Ireland said: “It is important to have anglers collecting scales as they can provide broad coverage across Ireland and collect scales throughout the fishing season. A scale resource which includes many different river systems in Ireland over several years is a great asset from a research perspective as it allows us to examine the factors affecting salmon survival at sea. We can compare how factors, such as climate change, are impacting survival by analysing

today's salmon scales alongside those from many decades ago."

All scales collected through the National Salmon Scale Project will be added to the National Salmon Scale Archive which is managed by Inland Fisheries Ireland. The archive, which consists of a dedicated storage facility and associated database, currently holds 19,300 scale samples from a total of 38 rivers representing 152 sampling years. The National Salmon Scale Project aims to increase the scale resource available to scientists for

ongoing and future research.

Dr Cathal Gallagher, Head of Research and Development at Inland Fisheries Ireland said: "Ultimately the National Salmon Scale Project will help inform future salmon management policies and activities. It is fitting therefore that we are launching this campaign during International Year of the Salmon which aims to raise awareness of what humans can do to ensure salmon and their habitats are conserved and restored against a backdrop of several environmental

pressures. This project offers anglers a very tangible and practical way of playing an active role in salmon conservation."

For more information on the National Salmon Scale Project, including how to take a sample safely and to request sample envelopes, visit www.fisheriesireland.ie/salmonscales. To find out more about International Year of the Salmon visit www.yearofthesalmon.org or www.fisheriesireland.ie/iys.

Funding available to angling clubs and community groups for fisheries conservation and development projects

Inland Fisheries Ireland launches 2019 Funding Call

Inland Fisheries Ireland has announced a new funding call for 2019 with three funding schemes now open. The funding has been made available for fisheries conservation projects and development projects nationwide through the National Strategy for Angling Development (NSAD).

Applications are invited from angling clubs, local development associations, tidy towns and others who may be looking to carry out projects. The 2019 funding call consists of three schemes:

• **The NSAD Capital Grants Scheme 2019 (€136,000)**

This scheme is aimed specifically at capital improvement works with grants available to groups and individuals looking to improve angling access and infrastructure in their locality. The 2019 scheme is open to the value of €136,000.

• **The Salmon and Sea Trout Rehabilitation, Conservation and Protection Fund**

This scheme focuses on the protection of both salmon and sea trout. It will fund rehabilitation, protection and conservation projects,

all of which must focus on salmon or sea trout. This fund replaces the Salmon Conservation Fund and extends it to include both salmon and sea trout with project values starting from €2,000 for awareness projects. The upper limit of €15,000 has been removed.

• **The Midlands Fisheries Fund (€50,000)**

This scheme will focus on conservation and rehabilitation projects in the midland fisheries permit area. The fund has been created through contributions from the permit income received via the Midlands Fisheries Group permit area.

Sean Canney TD, Minister with responsibility for the inland fisheries sector, said: "Since the inception of the National Strategy for Angling Development, we have invested €3.4 million in fisheries development, protection and conservation projects across the country. Progress is being made in the delivery of projects which support vital fisheries conservation and rehabilitation and which enhance Ireland's angling offering. The fisheries resource

should be enjoyed by all and this funding call today once more will help bring angling to the broader community in a conservation focused manner."

Suzanne Campion, Head of Business Development at Inland Fisheries Ireland said: "We are now inviting expressions of interest for this funding call and look forward to working with community groups from application to delivery stage on their projects. We are already partnering with over a hundred clubs and associations in the delivery of fisheries projects. The commitment of these groups in making a valuable difference to their locality is inspiring."

For more information about the 2019 Funding Call, to download an information booklet and to submit an expression of interest, please visit www.fisheriesireland.ie/funding. All applicants must apply through an 'Expression of Interest' form, to progress to full application. Full applications may be submitted from the 20th of May with the closing date for applications the 20th of June 2019.

New angling facility in Foxford gives access to all

Inland Fisheries Ireland has welcomed the opening of East Mayo Anglers Association disabled angling facility on the River Moy in Foxford, County Mayo. The €200,000 facility, which was opened last Friday by Michael Ring TD, Minister for Rural and Community Development, gives access to wheelchair users and those with reduced mobility over a large stretch of the popular salmon angling destination.

The new facility comes with a 76 metre accessible fishing platform with access ramps and railings to allow all members of the public to safely access the river. It also includes changing facilities, designed for shelter from the weather, and an accessible car park. The project was funded by Inland Fisheries Ireland to the tune of €160,000 under the National Strategy for Angling Development with a further €30,000 contributed from East Mayo Anglers

Association.

The project is just one of many fisheries development projects being completed across the country under the National Strategy for Angling Development, which is the first comprehensive national framework for the development of Ireland's angling resource. With an overarching emphasis on conservation, the Strategy focuses on improving angling access, developing angling tourism and recognising angling as a key leisure and recreational pursuit.

Michael Ring TD, Minister for Rural and Community Development said at the launch: "The highly collaborative approach of both East Mayo Anglers Association and Inland Fisheries Ireland has led to the high quality facility here today. The ongoing conservation and development of our fisheries resource relies on a high level of collaboration between all those who have an interest in this precious

natural amenity and today, we see the fruits of such a partnership. I would like to take this opportunity to recognise and sincerely congratulate all the club committee members who have worked tirelessly to get us to this point today."

Dr Ciaran Byrne, CEO of Inland Fisheries Ireland said: "I would like to acknowledge the commitment and hard work of East Mayo Anglers Association who have delivered this fantastic new angling facility. Their dedication and constructive attitude to making a valuable difference in their locality is exemplary.

The idea for this accessible angling facility was borne in Foxford and we were delighted to support with financial assistance and guidance, where needed, from our staff. We are working to replicate projects and partnerships, just like this one, across Ireland through the National Strategy for Angling Development."



East Mayo Anglers Association's new facility

Sometimes they just ain't biting!

For many years I have fished for Blue Shark, in fact I bought the reel I still use in 1976. A bit of looking after (a wash in freshwater) after each trip and an odd wipe with an oily cloth means it is still nearly as good as new. As an environmental NGO and at meetings with other NGOs I have heard a lot in recent years about the decline of various shark species. I have also seen this with my own eyes. As a kid I used to catch Spurdog on mackerel feathers, but their population dropped by an estimated 95% in the early 2000s and they are now a species with zero TAC, meaning they cannot be taken aboard a fishing boat or landed. Recreational fishing did not cause this decline!

Even though I do remember the bad old days when loads of spurdogs were dumped after an angling contest, thankfully those days are long gone, and in all my time shark fishing since then, I have never seen

a shark larger than a spotted dogfish killed.

It also used to be the case that sharks had to be brought ashore to be weighed if an angler wanted to claim a specimen. I am proud to have played a part in getting measuring mats accepted by the Specimen Fish Committee as a way of claiming specimen fish without the need to kill them. Even now some NGOs think angling for some sharks should be banned.

Anglers are very aware of their responsibilities and sharks are treated with respect and survive well if handled correctly. I have seen one angler instruct another as to how to handle fish caught - good practice. Anglers do not have the resources to contradict these powerful NGOs. The industry does. It is accidental shark by-catch and not so accidental catching of sharks for the sharkfin trade that has put many species in peril - not recreational angling!

Pointing the finger at angling distracts from the real problem. Porbeagle shark angling has come in for particular targeting with some saying it should be banned because Porbeagles are endangered. They are, but not by angling. European longliners targeting tuna catch loads of them each year, and I have even heard that some Spanish fishing ports land them all the time. I do know there have been some prosecutions over the years, but allegedly money talks in commercial fishing.

Unlike many calling for a ban, I decided I would see exactly what goes on, so I connected on social media with one of the top (if not the top Porbeagle angler in Ireland) Graham Smith. Graham has caught many Porbeagle shark from boat and kayak. He has videos on Facebook and YouTube, and has many large shark to his credit and he was happy to bring me out on a trip to try for



Michael and Ivan tag and release a fish.

(photo: Graham Smith)



Sauteed before being grilled - simply delicious.

one.

It took some time, but eventually I got the call and drove to Malin Head in the van to find Graham there with his self-made caravan trailer complete with kayak on the roof. He and another angler called Michael had been out for an hour and had had one 'hit' which did not hook up. So it looked good for the morning, when two more lads were arriving with another boat.

These guys are into fishing big time

Word gets out and in the morning there were actually five boats from all over the country getting ready to go out from this remote slipway near Malin Head. Anyway, I was going out with two Lithuanian lads who are friends of Graham, Alex and Ivan. These guys are big into fishing and Ivan has experienced catching Porbeagles, including a number of hook-ups this year, one of which broke his rod before he got it to the side of the boat for it to be unhooked and released. He told me of his

delight that he could place his hand on its nose and that it would follow him around the side of the boat before release. Bear in mind that Porbeagles are related to Great White Sharks, so with a flick of its tail it could probably have had his hand or most of the meat from it. Anyway, it swam off strongly.

Unlike Blue sharks, Porbeagles are mainly sight feeders, so using 'chum,' 'shirvy', 'rubby-dubby' is not necessary. It really does smell and takes time to ripen anyway, so attractors with bait were attached to

heavy line and heavy duty rods. Graham was happy to lend me a 'wind-in leader' complete with circle hook. Circle hooks catch the fish in the corner of the mouth where they can be easily removed. The result is no deep hooked sharks.

Easter Saturday dawned wet and foggy while the rest of the country was bright and sunny. We were ready for the off at about seven in the morning. The fog meant that Graham would be confined to a boat today, as he was taking no risks.

I headed out with Alex and Ivan. We tried for a couple of hours with the Porbeagle gear, but not even a hit, so we switched to conventional bottom fishing gear in the hope that we would catch some fish. I have fished Inishowen before and always came home with some Red Gurnard, Coalie or other assorted species. However, this day did not look like being such a fishy day.

Things were very slow until we hit an area of Coalfish about the size of a football field. When we were in it, we caught two to three pound fish in twos and threes on the feathers, but as soon as we drifted out of the



No Coalfish would be wasted.



Everything was on hand to go fishing in the morning.

area things went quiet. After a few drifts across it we had loads of fish and as Alex had told me he had a couple of friends who had asked him to bring them back a few fish and I intended to use some, they would all be eaten.

In the afternoon the sun came out after a brief light shower. The sea was flat calm apart from the tidal swirls which make this a very tricky area to boat in: not for the inexperienced. I kept a watch out for Basking Sharks for which this area is renowned. Nothing, not even a dolphin or porpoise, which was disappointing. However there were plenty of pieces of plastic, and even a rubber boot drifted by as we fished hard throughout the day.

Closer examination revealed a tiny ling

I felt some weight on my line as I reeled in to rebait the feathers. An

octopus held the bait so tightly I lifted it into the boat. Shortly after Ivan had another stuck tight to his bait. We caught a total of three, one let go as soon as the sun hit it, not very big, but my one will be cooked and eaten as soon as I get home. I also managed to catch what I thought was a small rockling. Closer examination revealed that I had a tiny ling, only one barbule as opposed to three under its chin. Ivan then caught a decent codling of about four or five pounds. He was delighted. At one point we hit a swarm of baby Colies of which we caught just a few which we returned before moving on, even though we could see shoals of them under the boat on the echo sounder.

We called it a day at around four o'clock. We all had a long drive ahead of us and had had a great day out on the water and even caught a few fish. I took my octopus and left the lads

with the fish. No Porbeagle, but I left with the impression that these guys who fish for them really do care about the fish. Unlike some of the less enlightened anglers out there, who might catch the odd Porbeagle while targeting Blues. Porbeagles in Donegal are not taken from the water to be photographed, but are unhooked and released beside the boat. They told me that all sharks they had caught previously had swum off strongly when released. This fact is borne out by results of tagging which showed very good survival rates for rod caught Porbeagle sharks. Blaming recreational anglers is distracting from the real problems sharks have. A couple of weeks before I went to try, Ivan and Graham had caught two sharks including a huge female. They had lost a couple too, and had several unproductive hits too. But as with all fishing, sometimes they just ain't biting! Maybe next time.



A ROAD LESS TRAVELLED

Peace & calm on Lough Arrow.

Rivers and the inhabitants of the watery element were made for wise men to contemplate, and fools to pass by without consideration' said Izaak Walton. I would imagine that many of us are guilty of passing by angling riches too many times, we tend to hog our local waters rather than make the effort to escape to the incredible iconic Irish limestone loughs to ply our trade.

Of course there are financial and time constraints involved and a one day trip is wasted in time travelling, setting up the boat and leaving just as the fish start feeding into the darkness. There's a lot of frustration in the short trip and fortunate are those who live near one of the great loughs.

After a long barren winter, Nature is wakened by the sun from the lengthening days, as gorse, daffodils and primroses appear, Easter comes and goes, then suddenly we are into the fishing season. Just to be on a Lough is an experience for the senses, rolling waves and the expanse of the open

waters, intimate bays, the islands and the wildlife of the lush meadows; after the dark days of winter the heat of the sun has brought hope and new life to the countryside.

'If you can't be content with what you've received, then be thankful for what you have escaped' are more wise words from Izaak Walton. For me, angling is an escape from work and day to day life, the loughs and rivers are a sanctuary. Many areas of our loughs feel like hallowed ground. Church Island and Holywell on Sheelin, Ballindoon on Lough Arrow, Inchagoill on the Corrib for example, where there's a sense of place, of history and it's a privilege just to be there, especially while enjoying our quest for the beautiful wild brown trout that inhabit their waters.

We anglers are blessed with a sport that brings us to the most beautiful places in Ireland, places that most people don't even know exist and our lives are enriched by the experience. As Easter passes, the urge to be out on the water grows stronger and hours are

spent at the fly tying bench devising new patterns and reinventing old ones.

The talk in the pub is of duckfly, buzzers, olives and mayfly, boat engines are pulled out of the shed to be checked, wooden boat seats are rubbed down and varnished once again. A trip to the tackle shop for new leader material etc. and catch up on the latest gossip, mayfly time is on the horizon and the jungle drums will be sounding!

Before long we're drifting along the shore, glad to be out at last, swallows are hawking the reedbeds, green shoots just appearing amongst the rustling dead stems. The swallows are picking off the hatching buzzers and we are looking for trout which are doing the same. The Duckfly are over, two weeks from St. Patrick's Day is their season, but a cold wind can ruin the angler's chances.

Now there are campto buzzers, grey boys and olive buzzers as well as lake olives. The lake olives don't mind rough weather, but the buzzers favour it milder and a bit of heat can bring a hatch and warm the angler too.



The author with tone to the Green Wulff.

A trout bulges just under the surface thirty feet down the drift, then another. We retrieve the casts in readiness for the fish coming in range and touch the trailing oar to keep the boat tight to the reed bed, with trout feeding just where the calm meets the ripple. A slight movement in the ripple indicates a trout and the cast of emergers and buzzer on the point sails out and drops gently just feet from the fish. A slow figure of eight retrieve and suddenly everything goes tight as the trout takes hold, then line slides out as he bolts for the deep water. At last, the season has started!

'No life is so happy and so pleasant as the life of a well-govern'd angler,' Izaak Walton. By the time May comes the countryside has been transformed, along the shore and islands swathes of bluebells and anemones

bloom before the leaves of hawthorn, oak, ash and alder block out the light. The pink flowers of the herb Robert and red campion mix with the yellow flowers of the buttercup and marsh marigold.

As I tread the shore I can smell the crushed mint and, venturing into the woodland, the aroma of wild garlic mixes with the heady aroma of hawthorne blossom. I'm gathering some



Hallowed ground: Church Island on Lough Sheelin where swallows and trout feast on a huge Mayfly hatch.



A real beauty.



Loughshore breakfast.



An afternoon break is the time to greet old friends.

kindling for the Kelly Kettle and almost step on a nesting goose huddled on the island. The down blowing from the side of the nest and the black of her eye are the only noticeable things, she's so well concealed in the undergrowth.

Emerging from the leafy canopy back out into the light I notice some Mayfly flying overhead into the trees of the island from the open water, a sight to gladden the heart of any angler! A cuckoo calls in the distance and a pair of marauding grey crows are pilfering songbirds' nests on the neighbouring shore. All around is the song of our summer migrants, chiffchaffs, reed warblers, grasshopper warblers, reed buntings and the swallows and martins twitter as they hawk the reed beds. Some mallards are herding duckling broods in the margins and new life is everywhere.

The old anglers will tell us that the Mayfly appear with the blossom of the whitethorne and this is an enchanting time to be on the lough, a secret world denied to all but the angler. With the Mayfly an angler gets two bites at the cherry: the hatching dun can bring on the rise of trout, but the spent fly is an easier prey as it lies on the water surface depositing its eggs and finally dying.

Fishing the dun or greenfly can involve pulling traditional wet flies or fishing the dries depending on conditions, but the spent gnat is dry fly angling of the highest order. Locating and patiently tracking a trout quietly sucking down flies in the half light of a summer's evening is a challenging job, but the rewards are high as the big trout will be on the prowl at this time.

On a warm evening, late in May or early June, a light breeze carrying the heady hawthorne scent, air filled with the sound of birdsong, Mayfly dancing above the trees with the mated females flying out to the open waters to deposit their eggs, wings glittering in the pink light of the sunset, we scan the slicks for feeding fish. The dead and dying flies are gathered where the ripple and calm water meet and we hold the boat on the edge of the calm lane. Rises to spent



Bill Chapman's golden flanked trout on the spent gnat.

mayfly can be very hard to see, especially with large trout who suck down the fly without breaking the surface. We listen intently and presently a suck and a tiny dimple in the slick, then another. I ease the boat over quietly on the oars to get in range and a fish is coming up the slick towards us. My colleague drops his flies eight feet ahead of the trout and it grazes closer up the edge of the ripple until suddenly one of the flies disappears, fly line zips through the water in the strike and line fizzles out as a large trout runs, then explodes out of the water shaking its

head in the dusk of the summers evening. Pure magic!

'Blessings upon all that hate contention, and love quietnesse, and vertue, and Angling,' Izaak Walton. By the time the foxgloves have appeared Mayfly will be but a memory, though summer on an Irish Lough has more treasures to show in the form of the sedge, which hatch principally in the evening and with them, if the air is mild, there will be buzzers.

Sitting in a bay on a summer's evening, there's time to relax and recharge the batteries. Sunset on an Irish

Lough is something to behold as the dying rays transform from yellow-orange to pink, until everything is suffused red and purple. A magical time, of quiet contemplation and peace, until of course the light dims, the swallows fly to roost in the reed beds, bats emerge and the first green peters appear skipping and scuttling across the surface, making a commotion guaranteed to attract the trout which slash wildly at the fleeing insects.

From mid July to the end of the season there will be sedge fishing on the loughs, even earlier with the welshman's button, murrough or grey flag. Day time angling can be had when the smaller sedges are hatching, the silverhorn and grousewing sedges swarm around trees on the shore and get blown into the water, or fly on to the surface laying their eggs.

At the shore of Lough Arrow's Ballindoon House (Baden Powells' Irish residence) I've often pulled in for tea and the sedges swarming beneath the ancient trees get blown onto the water bringing up trout to feed. These fish are vulnerable to a small elk hair sedge and a cast can be made from the shore or the back of the beached boat.

For me the best of sedge fishing is the green peter, which brings the most violent rises as trout try to snatch it as it scuttles to cover. Anchoring on an island on Arrow one August evening, I waded along the little bays and points trying to look into the west to catch the last dying rays of the sun and spot any rises. I'd a couple of buzzers on droppers and a sedge fly on the point. I took several smallish trout on buzzers but, as the darkness descended, sedges began hatching in earnest and large trout began patrolling, slashing through the surface as they intercepted the scuttling sedges trying to make the shelter of the island shore. The light went completely and all I had to guide my casts were the sounds of the trout rising. I stalked quietly into the last bay and out in the darkness a large trout swirled at a peter, then took a couple of buzzers with that slurping noise.

I knew he was passing in front along the reed bed, so I dropped the flies a few yards from stems and then gave them a little twitch or two. Suddenly the sedge on the point was snatched and the reel sounded as a large trout took off into the inky black waters. I played the fish up and down the shore, stumbling over limestone rocks and along the sandy bay until my arms ached and at last he was wallowing in front of me as I tried to unship the net from my back.

Turning on the head torch I could see the length of the trout's white belly, it would be my biggest trout. Down went the net but it hit a rock just under the surface and the big trout panicked in the shallows, splashing about. I tried again but the net stuck on the sharp rock and this time a dropper caught on the mesh and the trout threw the hook, his bulk splashing half in, half out of the water. The big spots and golden flank slid back into the dark waters as he bolted leaving me shaken in the darkness. I lit a cigar as I pulled out for home on the oars. If only I'd got a photo, but at least I had

the memory, the sport and the excitement. What an experience! It happened several years ago and I relive the moment every time I fish there. But 'No man can lose what he never had,' said Izaak Walton, and he was right.

You will find angling to be like a virtue of humanity, which has a calmness of spirit and a world of blessing attending upon it, Izaak Walton. We in Ireland are certainly blessed to have such a rich angling heritage. Our unique limestone loughs each has its own atmosphere, from the wild and dangerous loughs of the west, the mighty Corrib and Mask, to the hugely fertile midland loughs, Sheelin and Ennell. They are hallowed ground for an Irish angler, a place like no other, we are so privileged to pursue our sport in an arena which is home to numerous historical ecclesiastical sites, archeological artefacts, ancient settlements, ring-forts, crannogs, standing stones, church islands. Time spent here can only be good for the spirit, good for the soul.

These varied habitats are home to geological features, clints and grykes, turloughs and a huge range of unique flora and fauna, extremely important conservation sites to be preserved and protected. We have access to so many incredible wild fisheries and it's often said that a day spent on a lough such as Arrow is not deducted from a man's allotted span. I'd imagine that days spent in these sacred loughs could only add to a man's lifespan as the worries, stress and troubles of life quickly melt away and the angler becomes immersed in another world where time and space take on a new meaning. Angling in these places is part of Irish tradition and culture and long may it continue. Even if I don't get to spend as much time there as I'd like, it's just good enough to know that such pristine wild places exist, where the cuckoos call, totters haunt and the trout feast on Mayflies in the half light of the summer nights. Also remember of course: take only your memories and leave only your footprints!

A big lough experience is never forgotten.



Dalradian and the Sperrins – The Controversy Continues

The Peaceful Beauty of the Sperrins.

In the last issue we published an article “Dalradian - Economic Miracle or Environmental Disaster?” wherein we posed readers concerns about the potential environmental impact on this rather unspoilt and wildly beautiful area by the proposed mining venture to Dalradian.

Having facilitated Dalradian in stating their position on the major concerns that had been expressed, we promised readers that we would allow two or three of the protest groups/interests to put their opposing arguments. A representative from Save Our Sperrins and local angler Mark Tierney submitted two very passionate pieces, arguing that the potential economic benefits to the community of the mining project could well be greatly outweighed by the potential environmental damage that could be caused including to water quality and angling.

To ensure balance in the article and to check the accuracy of figures used in the arguments, we decided to run these past Dalradian as a courtesy. They helpfully pointed out some of the figures taken from their planning documents had been misinterpreted e.g. that the projected actual usage of cyanide was c 2tonnes per day for 7 days a week (average 14 tonnes per week) and the 20 tonne figure mentioned by some protestors was probably the maximum amount to be stored on site. They also pointed out some other minor inaccuracies in the manner in which the protestors had interpreted projections used by Dalradian in their planning documentation and these were duly edited.

However, what Dalradian appeared to object to most, through their Public Relations team, was us publishing a

photograph of a discharge, from drilling, provided by a protestor. We have been assured by the person who took this photograph, that it was taken by her walking through an unlocked gate. Further it has already been published on facebook. Dalradian appeared to imply that the photograph was taken during an incursion by protestors at the drilling area. They claim this incursion actually caused a machine to be shut down causing the discharge. They have provided a video which appears to demonstrate an incursion, but not by the person who took the photograph.

We argued that irrespective of the incident, the photograph appeared to demonstrated a discharge seeping into a water course which would tend to support the protestors’ concerns about discharges from the site. I was astonished to hear what I took to be a threat of the company’s ‘solicitors writing to us’ raised in the middle of what had until then been a cordial conversation.

We made it clear that such threats would not deter us from publishing legitimate objections to this project. And we finished the conversation on a cordial note making it clear we were happy to keep the lines of communication open with Dalradian.

Dalradian came back to us with ‘suggested edits’ to the submitted material stating:

“.... Dalradian has grave concerns about the level of inaccuracies in the copy provided to you by the protestorsin particular, the suggested use of the photograph. They are concerned that the piece as it stands is defamatory.” This has been followed up by yet another reference to possible litigation if we didn’t accept the Dalradian ‘edits’

and /or if we published the photograph i.e. “I am very keen to avoid going down the legal route.”

Our team has discussed what appears to be a threat of legal action against us by Dalradian to prevent us publishing the protestors submissions without comprehensive editing. And with us pushing a publishing deadline, we have decided that at this time of the year we cannot afford to have the circulation of this important Summer magazine and / or the organisation of our events compromised by having to deal with potential legal challenges. We therefore have decided - for now - to hold back publication of the protestors’ concerns about this mining project until the Autumn issue.

We will continue to monitor this issue and we intend take up the invitation to visit the mine and speak with Dalradian management, and also meet with the protest groups to hear their concerns at first hand.

Meanwhile, those with an interest in the controversy can visit the Dalradian website and the protestors’ Facebook pages as well as looking at the wider concerns about gold mining on the Internet.

STOP PRESS – Anti Gold Mining Council Election Candidate Elected



Emmet McAleer, son of Save Our Sperrins Chairman, Cormac, was the first Councillor to be elected in the Mid Tyrone DEA of Fermanagh and Omagh Council.

Come and get your gun checked and serviced

By Scott Wilson Gunmaker

We asked Scott to give us a little bit of background on his business that was started by his late father in 1967 and what he will be showcasing at the fair.

I started learning about guns at the early age of 8 years old from my late father John Wilson, who was a self-taught gunsmith & Gunmaker in our family business.

I started working full-time at the age of 17 after I left school. My father was a very good Gunmaker and designed all his guns himself, including over 1,500 walking stick shotguns in different configurations along with Boxlock ejectors and some sidelocks.

He also made sword sticks, which included umbrella types; he also designed 3 versions of his single-trigger system, which I still use today on the guns I make.

In the time I have been a Gunmaker/gunsmith I have made 12 guns, all being Boxlock shotguns in 12,16 & 20 bore.

Back at our workshop we carry out all the work that's required, which includes repair, servicing and complete overhauls. The only thing we do not carry out is engraving and this we pass onto an excellent engraver who has worked at Purdeys.

We offer all service from basic check-overs along with servicing and bespoke parts, springs. Re-jointing



actions, all re-proof work is undertaken and we can arrange for them to be re-proofed at one of the 2 proof houses in the UK. We can carry out all barrel work including sleeving, making new barrels along with blacking and re-browning barrels. We can also undertake hot salt blacking for all the furniture i.e. trigger-guards, top-lever etc.

All woodwork is covered from re-finishing to re-stocking. All bespoke leather gun cases & slips are made to order.

My partner Helen Wesson joined me 4 years ago as an apprentice and I have been teaching her during this time the

various procedures in being a gunsmith. She has taken this on board and has become a good gunsmith in her own right, being particularly good in servicing all guns and bluing pins & blacking parts and along with her woodworking skills, Helen has become an important part of the business and her passion for this type of work is growing.

Please feel free to check our Facebook business page out – Scott Wilson Gunmaker where we will be making some special offers just for the Irish Game Fair Only.

We both look forward to meeting you all and please come in and say hello.

Scott & Helen will be offering a gun assessment; servicing & repair service so don't miss out on this great opportunity to get your gun checked over. They will also be displaying some guns that have been made by both himself & his late Father like the example below.



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ART & ANTIQUES

Oh, the joy of finding a quaint old antique shop in a strange town, when one is searching for nothing in particular but always on guard to be captivated by a 'find'. Well, I have news for you....take a glance into the future, perhaps no more than five or ten years down the road, and the prospect of finding such 'gems' as the once famous curiosity shop could be a thing of the past. If it has not disappeared from the scene, the victim of ever rising commercial rates, demographic drifts or whatever, its numbers will be no where near that of what they once were. Of course there will still be premises selling antiques, curiosities and memorabilia items but will they have the charisma of those which went before them.

The days of rusty, dusty and cob-webbed premises selling everything from a historic anchor to grandmother's sewing needle are numbered. In America they have been sounding a strong warning about the future of 'quaint little antique stores', as they call them, for more than a year now. And remember what happens in America has a habit of coming home to us in the United Kingdom and Ireland.

The only difference is that instead of it taking five or six years to occur here, as it used to do, nowadays things happen a lot faster. The benefits of new technology come at high prices and while we applaud a lot of what the Internet has brought us, by way of making lots of things more accessible to us when buying or selling, there have been consequences.

Many of us welcomed the coming of the large supermarket, sited conveniently on the edge of town and with its easy access and comfortable parking. But how many of us went back a few years later to count the small shops which went out of business, sacrificed in the name of commercial progress to make way for the



Walter Osborne oil sold for €85,000 (ADAMS)

supermarket? I believe the Internet is doing the same to those who went into business selling antiques and collectibles in shops off the High St or back street and in many small villages and towns. If people are no longer in love with what they find on the High St they go elsewhere so the footfall to 'curiosity' shops is no longer as strong.

Antique shops once plentiful in small towns and rural areas of America will, it is warned, finally disappear forever. A shrinking population base, coupled with high commercial rents make it impossible for them to survive. Who is brave enough to say the same is not happening here. Yes, the bulk of antique business will take place on the internet through the services of Ebay and other

sales and purchasing outlets. Maybe that is what people want; the comfort of being able to sit in front of a small screen, buying and selling at ease. There is no doubt for the buyer the world is his or her oyster, highlighting wares to a very wide audience and attracting would-be buyers they will never meet except through PayPal, or some other money exchanger.

IT'S not every day you will find a genuine 'sleeper' in a charity shop

But remember many people selling today on the Internet are not just doing so because they are down-sizing, disposing of unwanted gifts or other items, or finding a new home for the

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‘treasures’ they have just inherited from aged or deceased relatives. No, many online sellers would tell you of the ‘little business’ they can now run through being able to navigate around a 21st century computer. And where do they get the items they are trying at times to flog? Of course from antique shops, bric-a-brac places, car boot sales and the ubiquitous charity shops. Now it is not every day you will find a genuine ‘sleeper’ in a charity shop but remember those running such shops are not as gifted in being able to value an item as those in the trade. So it is not impossible to pick up an item for a few pence even and later turn it into pounds.

An acquaintance of mine, need I say one without much conscience, haggled over a Victorian hall stand which was being sold in a charity shop. The vendor thought it was worth £30, but the buyer beat her down to

£25 and later sold it for almost £200. I cannot imagine him repeating the exercise in a well established antique shop. But I still feel the charity shop will still be around when many of our antique outlets have disappeared.

Don’t get me wrong. I am not an arch critic of the Internet but I do believe in so far as antiques and collectibles are being sold on it, it has to be better monitored and regulated in the future. It is almost criminal the manner in which items are being listed as ‘rare,’ ‘vintage,’ ‘antique’ and ‘historic.’ These are words that should mean what they say but in many cases they do not.

Recently I was fooled through the purchase of a Masonic jewel, something I buy from time to time to add to a small collection. It was a highly attractive item and while it was running in a week long auction it did not, at the end of the day, cost me an arm and a leg. But when I got it home I discovered, without much research, it was not masonic in origin but had been awarded to a member of the Royal Ancient and Antediluvian Order of the Buffaloes, another fraternal organisation.

I could have sent it back and

demand my money returned but did not. Too much bother. I wonder though how many others have fallen into a

similar trap. Great care too has to be taken when considering buying Internet items billed as being ‘gold’ or ‘silver’.



Aloysius O'Kelly oil, *West of Ireland interior scene*, sold at €40,000 (ADAMS)



Colin Middleton oil, *'The Ventriloquist'*, sold for €24,000 (ADAMS)



The sale's top price of €150,000 was for a Jack Yeats oil (WHYTES)

Again you can be disappointed in your purchase.

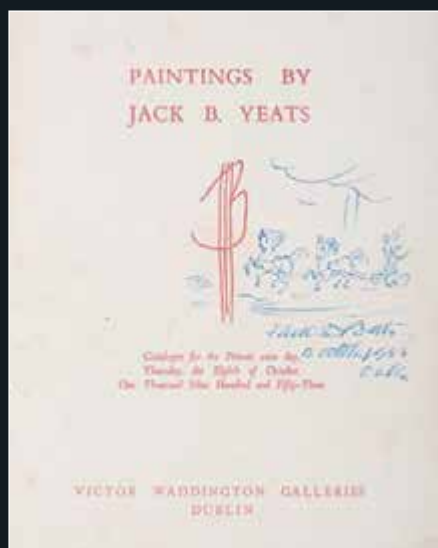
In future, before I purchase anything that is described as rare, vintage or masonic, I will try and do a little bit of research before chasing after it. Maybe at the end of the day the good, old

fashioned auction house is the real place to buy and sell. Sadly they too will diminish in number but not for a long, long time, I hope.

AROUND THE SALES

Good quality Irish art continues to

change hands and a fine Walter Osborne oil sold for €85,000 at **ADAMS spring sale**. It was followed by an Aloysius O'Kelly oil, an excellent west of Ireland interior scene at €40,000 and a Colin Middleton oil, 'The Ventriloquist' at €24,000.



An exhibition catalogue, paintings by Jack Butler Yeats realised €1,300.



James Humbert Craig, painted for the Empire Marketing Board, sold for €54,000 (WHYTES)

Among other leading prices were: Edwin Hayes, €22,000; George Russell (AE) €20,000, Basil Blackshaw, €20,000, Nathaniel Hone, €18,000, Charles Lamb, €17,000, Frederick McWilliam bronze leg figure, €15,000, Erskine Nichol oil, €14,000.

In the earlier 'Works on Paper' sale a Captain Francis Grose (1731-1791) album of five hundred humorous sketches and caricatures sold for €3,600 while a Lucas Van Leyden book, bound in calf, Jesus and the Twelve Apostles made €3,000. An exhibition catalogue, paintings by Jack Butler Yeats realised €1,300.

WHYTE'S auction house also enjoyed a highly successful **March sale** when just under 90pc of lots sold for a gross total of over €1.25m. The highest price paid was €150,000 for a Jack Yeats oil, while a smaller Yeats work realised €115,000.

A large oil by James Humbert Craig, painted for the Empire Marketing Board in the 1920s for use as a poster promoting the linen industry, sold for €54,000. And it was something of a surprise when a Paul Nietzsche self portrait, expected to make between €800 to €1200 came under the hammer at €4,400. A Paul Henry landscape made €66,000 and a Louis le Brocquy sketch, €49,000.



(Above)
This Paul Nietzsche came under the hammer at €4,400 (WHYTES)

(Right)
Louis le Brocquy sketch, made €49,000 (WHYTES)

Hunting Roundup

Around the meets

The worst thing that can be said to a hunting correspondent when he arrives at a meet is “you should have been here last week!” So it was at the **Killultagh Old Rock and Chichester** meet at Stoneyford, outside Lisburn, where everyone was still talking about the previous Saturday’s meet, at Dundrod, but as I wasn’t there I can’t report on it!

Huntsman Patrick Headdon had on a 15½ couple mixed pack with Chris Berry whipping-in and our field master was Philip Swann.

Patrick first drew behind Armstrong’s as far as Sheepwalk Road, then White Mountain Road all of which were blank and he fared no better at Hunt’s Hill Road. Things improved as the huntsman drew along the side of Stoneyford Dam where one customer went afoot. He crossed Hunt’s Hill Road, in poor scenting conditions and with hounds in intermittent voice, before continuing on to the Water Commissioner’s land. Here the huntsman spent a lot of time on foot

before it became obvious that hounds had lost our pilot, to the chagrin of our huntsman despite this pilot having given us a one hour hunt. A further series of draws back towards Stoneyford Road, then Sheepwalk Road, all proved blank so Patrick Headdon reluctantly blew for home in late afternoon.

Huntsman Alan Reilly is standing down at the **Louth Foxhounds** and I attended his last meet, in Listoke, where I found palpable regret that he was leaving.

In his eight seasons here, Alan has built a reputation for breeding top quality hounds which hunt like demons and, on this penultimate day of February, they did so in spring like weather albeit in very patchy scenting conditions.

A forty strong mounted field, including four joint masters, Edmund Mahony, Joe Callan, Gerry Boylan and Eamon McGinn, followed the huntsman, his 12½ couple mixed pack and whippers-in John Sullivan and Oisín Duffy on a hack, from Listoke to

Townrath, but the first draw here proved blank as did Sandpit Road.

Our luck changed off the Termonfeckin Road as hounds put a fox afoot and a short, sharp hunt ensued before they lost him ahead of the railway line. However, this fox then reappeared and returned to the original covert where he was accounted for on Peter McDonnell’s land at Newtownstaldan after a good, bracing hunt. Alan Reilly drew on through the crossroads, towards Beaulieu and past the GAA pitch where a second fox went afoot, unsighted to us car followers. After a fast hunt he, too, was accounted for. A third fox then went afoot behind the GAA pitch and a long, bracing hunt past the Quarry then on to Premier Paraglaze and on as far as Drogheda Road then ensued. He swung back and ran as far as the Quarry where he was lost. Hounds drew around Beaulieu Wood and put another customer afoot presaging a fast hunt before he went to ground in the Wood.



'Nicely Over' at Ballymacross.



Huntsman Keith McCall with the Tynan & Armagh Foxhounds at Edenderry House.

Alan Reilly blew for home after 5pm which, for an 11am meet, meant that it had been a long, busy day.

I was at three quality Modern English packs' puppy shows last summer the Meath, the Ballymacad and the Westmeath where, at each the new entry included some sired by Louth Old English stallion hounds, mainly Randall112. This underlines the high quality of the Louth hounds and that whoever becomes huntsman here will reap the benefits of Alan Reilly's excellent work. Everyone here wishes him all the best for his future.

I finished my season with the **Fermanagh Harriers** at their final meet at Aghavea, outside Lisnaskea.

Huntsman Patrick Murphy had on a 12 ½ couple mixed pack, which included some Old English, some Modern English and some with Welsh blood and they worked very well together. He was assisted by Gerry Mullarkey while the hunt chairman, Padraig Sheridan, was field master to some twenty riders in the mounted field.

Hounds first drew Alan Hurst's and put a fox afoot, in the planting, which ran through Alan's son Alex's farm in to Barry Hennessey's then Eric Johnston's before going to ground in an old fort, on

Rosemary Breen's land. Hounds had hunted this fox for forty five minutes in patchy scenting conditions which were further complicated by slurry.

A draw at the master's cousins, Declan Murphy's, saw a hare rise in The Bottoms. It ran in to The Deer Park where hounds were stopped due to new born lambs and in-lamb ewes.

Patrick Murphy then blew for home, in late afternoon, to end everyone's season.

Heard it on the grapevine

Brian McConville MFH has retired at the East Down Foxhounds and a new mastership of Hunt Chairman and Honorary Secretary Donna Quail has taken office, with Declan Feeney continuing as huntsman.

Hunt charity ride raises £2,000 for NI Air Ambulance.

The Ballycross charity ride, now in its thirty-first year, was held on the last Saturday in March and attracted some ninety riders, from several local Hunts and from other disciplines.

Organised by the local Iveagh Foxhounds the course had sixty fences and covered almost ten miles, including some roadwork, crossing a total of

fifteen farms.

I was delighted to see local farmer Stanley Dougan (93) being driven round by his daughter, Ruth. He is one of the original organisers and thoroughly enjoyed the day's events, remarking on the quality of the fences. The event produced £2,000 for this very worthwhile charity and the organisers would like to thank the farmers and the fence builders as without them no event could take place.

Obituary Michael "Mickey" Flanagan

Michael "Mickey" Flanagan has died, some thirty years after retiring as whipper-in of the Tipperary Foxhounds.

He worked for the 'Tippets' for over forty years as whipper-in and kennel huntsman, most famously showing their hounds at Peterborough in 1966. They became the first hounds from outside Great Britain to win there, Grizzle winning the Bitch Championship and Growler taking the Doghound Reserve Championship.

In 1986, he again went to Peterborough and won taking the Best Restricted Unentered Bitch Class with Fever and the Best Couple of Bitches Class with Feline and Backchat.

The Tipps were and remain a four day a week pack and, superb horseman that he was, Mickey crossed the country with ease, cheerfully and always smiling making hordes of friends as he did so.

A wonderful ambassador for our sport Mickey remained immensely popular and I was always glad to see him at the National Hound Show at Stradbally and to note that he remained so popular.

His passing is very greatly regretted by everyone in Irish hunting circles and beyond. Every sympathy and condolence is extended to Mickey's family on their very sad loss.

Obituary Johnny Henry

A name synonymous with the Meath Hunt, Johnny Henry died on 10th March 2019. He was seventy-eight years of age and had been in ill health for some five years, an illness he bore with great courage and fortitude.

So renowned was Johnny it is said that, when he was introduced to Captain Ronnie Wallace, he was greeted with the words "So you're the famous

Johnny Henry then."

Johnny's great passions were the Meath Hunt, the Cortown community and its Gaelic football club but, most importantly, his family. He and his wife, Kathleen, celebrated their Golden Wedding anniversary in 2018 and they had eight children seven of whom survive him a daughter, Bernadette, having died in infancy. Two sons are joint huntsmen of the Meath Hunt, John jnr hunts the bitches and Kenny hunts the doghounds.

A virtuoso on the hunting horn, possessed of a great voice, a consummate horseman and a superb houndsman, Johnny Henry was a template for a huntsman. He recorded enormous success in the show ring and produced marvellous sport in the hunting field. Over sixty years dedication to the Meath Hunt as whipper-in, huntsman and then fieldmaster meant that Johnny had incalculable influence on that Hunt and he also offered advice, assistance and friendship to many other hunts.

Away from hunting, the Cortown

area also greatly benefited from Johnny Henry's presence and his involvement with the football club was all consuming. In a touching eulogy Father John Conlan spoke of Johnny greeting new families on their arrival in the parish with the words "Welcome to Cortown, have you any footballers?"

Corpus Christi Church, in Cortown, was packed to overflowing with at least as many people standing outside and that this was one of the biggest funerals I have attended in recent years reflected the enormous affection and respect in which Johnny was held. I was told that some people had to queue for two and a half hours to get into the family home to pay their respects personally, which they did willingly.

Everyone extends their very deepest sympathy to Mrs Henry, to her sons John jnr, David, Christopher, Kenny, and Martin, to her daughters Elizabeth and Maria and to the entire family circle on their very sad loss.

Hosts Hilary & Mark Thompson at the Tynan & Armagh Foxhounds meet at their home at Tullysarron.



A visit to the home of Ireland's finest fox hunting writers

I was reading Thoreau's famous essay "Walking" when I was exploring the secluded byways of West Cork recently. As I strolled into the pretty village of Castletownshend (a place which is little changed since the 19th Century) I had a copy of "Walking" in my rucksack and I sat down on a rock overlooking an inlet of the Atlantic and continued reading it.

It was a well known passage where Thoreau pointed out that walking has something of the spiritual and religious in it. He and his friends liked to think of themselves as Knights on the way to the Holy Land when they were walking. He thought it was bad form for people to not acknowledge this spiritual element in walking and he believed it was important to talk about it. He writes about it in a lighthearted way, but there is still a sincerity beneath the lightheartedness. "The chivalric and heroic spirit which once belonged to the Rider," he says, "seems now to reside in, or perchance to have subsided into, the walker - not the Knight, but Walker,

Errant. He is a sort of fourth estate, outside of Church and State and People."

Many writers loved and love, walking. Dickens and Nietzsche used to go on mighty, long walks. It helped them with their creativity, opened up new avenues in their thinking, and helped their writing blossom. "The moment my legs begin to move," commented Thoreau, "my thoughts begin to flow." He didn't mean negative thoughts, or anxious thoughts. He meant creative, spiritual, positive thoughts. The negative was in society. When the walker started walking, society and the negative were left behind. However, Thoreau also acknowledged that the negative, anxious and fearful thoughts sometimes stay with us during our walks. We had to be firm with ourselves and banish these bad ways of thinking. As he said, "What business have I in the woods, if I am thinking of something out of the woods?"

Thoreau also sometimes went hunting. He recounted participating in a

moose hunt in Maine in 1853. He wrote: "I went as reporter or chaplain to the hunters, - and the chaplain has been known to carry a gun himself."

When I walked into Castletownshend a high stone wall on my left marked the boundary of the castle estate. There were a number of small cottages opposite, which during the time of the British Empire were the dwellings of the Irish. The cottages were located outside the village, as was the Catholic church. There was very little Irish influence in Castletownshend. It was an unusual place because it was almost completely Anglo-Irish. It was an oasis of the Anglo-Irish encircled by the "wild Irish". It still has something of this atmosphere when you enter. It feels very English, charmingly so, and would be an ideal film set for a Jane Austen novel.

The village street descends reasonably steeply from the impressive gates of an estate. It's a lovely street, lined with attractive Georgian houses and cottages. One of the cottages is



The West Carbery Hounds. A meet at Drishane in April 1892.



Edith on Bridget, her favourite hunting horse.

called "Fuchsia" and resembles a chocolate-box English cottage. There is Sundial House, with its dial over the door, tall chimney and brick-corniced windows. There is a lovely Georgian house on the left and "the billiard room" (as it once was) on the right. There is Mary Ann's pub, followed by more elegant houses dropping down to the Townshends' Gothic castle. In the

middle of the street stands the "flower pot", with two rather large trees growing out of it.

Harry Clarke was one of Ireland's greatest artists

The Castle is now a guesthouse and private residence. A Colonel Richard Townshend received large grants of land here in 1652. Near the Castle is St

Barrahane's Church of Ireland Church, a lovely building featuring an eye-catching hexagonal tower. Inside the church there are three Harry Clarke windows, one of which depicts St Patrick and St George looking at one another across the Irish Sea. Harry Clarke was one of Ireland's greatest artists and his windows are justly famed. They reflected the Art Nouveau influence of Beardsley and Arthur Rackham.

In the graveyard surrounding the church lie the remains of Castletownshend's two very famous residents, Edith Somerville and Violet Florence Martin, authors of the Irish R.M. books in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, books which were massively popular in their time and were made into an excellent three part television series in the 1980s called "The Irish R.M." (which can now be viewed on RTE Player).

The various stories are about the life of an ex-British Army officer Resident Magistrate, Major Yeates, living in West Cork. The books and the television series are delightfully politically incorrect and often extremely funny. They have a wide assemblage of memorable characters and provide a great insight into the lifestyle of the period, including the love of fieldsports, a love which transcended class. The graves of Somerville and Ross are simple. They lie side by side, two Irish yews over them, the sea below.

The first of their books I read was "In Mr Knox's Country," which I can't recommend highly enough. As well as writing many fantastic books they were also excellent horseriders. If Thoreau was a Walker Errant, then they were Horseriders Errant, a state of being more closely linked to the Knights, because of the equestrian element. Edith and Martin were cousins and they first met in 1886. They were a brilliantly matched pair of minds and about a year after first meeting they decided to forge a literary career together. As they wrote they knew their novels were recording the death-throes of their class; that they were portraying the collapse of Anglo-



Castletownshend harbour during the mackerel fishing season. The photo is by Martin and seated figure is Edith Somerville's sister Hildegard.

Ireland and the rise of the new Irish middle class.

Great writers, great artists, at the height of their craft

They didn't adhere to social and class barriers and spoke naturally with the working class and the peasantry, the people who others in their station thought to be inferior. They may have been members of the privileged Anglo-Irish gentry but they weren't shackled by it. Because they were so at home in the native Irish world they were very familiar with the native speech in English, which they used to great effect in their novels. They learned Irish. They were deeply influenced by Maria Edgeworth and her book "Castle Rackrent". In other words, whilst the social history of their period and the politics of their period are very important we shouldn't be limited by that in our assessment of their works. They were great writers, great artists, practising at the height of their craft and on that merit alone can be enjoyed by everyone no matter what one's belief system.

One of the many memorable characters in "In Mr Knox's Country" is a man called "Walkin' Aisy". 'And that very afternoon,' Major Yeates narrates, 'on our way to Aussolas, we chanced to meet upon the road the local mason himself, William Shanahan, better known to fame as "Walkin' Aisy." He was progressing at a rate of speed that accorded with his sub-title, and, as I

approached him, a line of half-forgotten verse came back: "Entreat her not, her eyes are full of dreams".'

Somerville and Ross were avid foxhunters, hunting for many years with the West Carbery Foxhounds. Shooting and fishing was very popular in their surrounding community. In the households of the Anglo-Irish living in remote areas, the standard of the food was often pretty poor. Therefore shooting and fishing were seen as ways of embellishing their diets because it added salmon, trout, hare, duck, rabbit, pigeon to the table.

Foxhunting was considered to be the most enjoyable of the various countrysports but it was also the most dangerous. More women began to foxhunt from the mid 19th century onwards. Up until that period, says one writer, the women who hunted were, for the most part, noted for having "high

spirits and energy." They were "the unmarriedable, widows and viragos." In the latter part of the century it became more fashionable for liberated women to take part and it was seen as a statement of their liberation. Other statements included playing lawn tennis and bicycling. Somerville supported the suffragette movement. She was also a nationalist and believed in Home Rule. Martin's sympathies, in contrast, lay with unionism.

Riding side saddle put huge strain on the leg muscles

Women were expected to ride side saddle, which made the sport even more dangerous. Some of them were dragged and killed by their skirts which got caught in the saddle. The seat was unnatural and distorted their bodies. It twisted them sideways, with their right legs jammed and numbed, for up to



Five men of the Cork Militia, c.1860, coming up Castletownshend Hill.



Edith in hunting habit in 1905, aged forty-six.

eight hours a day. Edith began riding at four. Her right leg was damaged and troublesome, giving her great pain, from her late fifties onwards. Riding side saddle put huge strain on the leg muscles and it took considerable strength to maintain upright carriage, balance and control of the horse.

After one particularly excellent hunt, Edith wrote to Martin: "I am a bit stiff today and very sore under my right knee from a vile garter that I put on to keep

my stocking from slipping and rubbing, having cut into my leg from being too tight when the muscle contracted for jumping." Side saddle riders cannot fully use their own weight and gravity. They have only hands and balance to keep them in touch with the horse. (There's a side saddle association in Ireland. One practitioner wrote in defence of it, "We mustn't go around criticising things just because they're mad; that would leave us all terribly

vulnerable.")

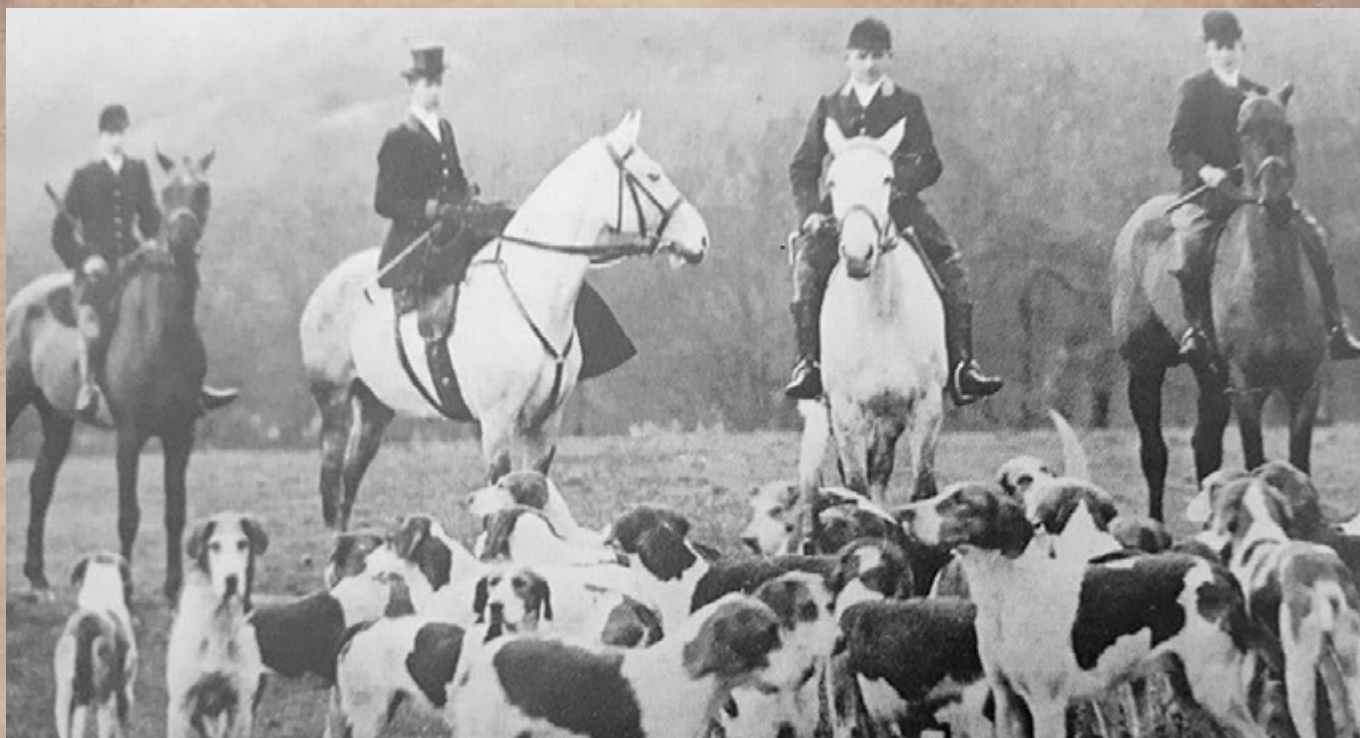
Edith was considered an outstanding rider and she spent a lot of her life on horseback. Martin's death in December 1915 is thought to have been caused by a bad hunting fall in November 1898 which caused a displacement in her back which resulted in the slow growth of a brain tumour. Martin had bad eyesight and it was a wonder to some that she hunted at all. Edith wrote in "Irish memories": "Before I knew how extravagantly short-sighted she was, I did not appreciate the pluck that permitted her to accept any sort of a mount, and to face any sort of a fence, blindfold, and that inspired her out hunting to charge whatever came in her way with no more knowledge of what was to happen than Marcus Curtius had when he leaped into the gulf."

Martin usually got a lead from Edith. Edith described the bad fall in November 1898: "Martin rode Dervish at a fixed pole into the seven acre field; he took it with his knees and fell right over it, pitching Martin in the mud and apparently falling on her. Mr Purdon and I picked her up. Thought her dead. When recovered found her shoulder was bruised but no bones broken, and only a few small cuts on her face." For weeks afterwards Martin could not walk without excruciating pain and spent weeks prostrate and in low spirits. She did not return to hunting for several years.

Edith's favourite horse was Bridget, which she bought at a horse fair in Bantry. The seller apologised for the mare's skittish nature and promised she would be as quiet as a chicken to ride; to which Edith thought: "Wouldn't you be looking at her for a long time before you thought of a chicken?" Edith hunted her for ten seasons "and she never gave me a fall that was not strictly necessary."

'He have 8 hens and 2 ducks carried'

The West Carberys hunted wherever farmers were complaining about foxes killing their poultry. Edith was master of



The West Carbery Foxhounds, Drishane, 1908.

the hunt and she had a great mound of letters from country people asking her to bring the hounds to kill foxes. One of these letters read, "Dear Miss, just a few lines to let you know the fox is making a great set on me I am beggard with him he have 8 hens and 2 ducks carried and I badly in want of them. I remain your truly Mrs Cotter." Another letter said, "I thought I had the house well fastened but he scrope under the door...every wet night always we find his foot marks around the fowl house...when ye will come the way here after, we will do all in our power for ye to help ye to catch him."

Being master of the hunt was a big drain on Edith's finances and she was always short of money. It wasn't just the Anglo-Irish who were members of the West Carberys. Many farmers were members as well, including farmers with small landholdings. Men and boys followed the hunt on foot, taking vantage points and enjoying the spectacle. The contemporary stereotype that hunting was a sport for landlords only is wide of the mark.

I have read a lot of fox hunting literature, including books and articles, over the years ever since I fell in love with horse-riding in my late teenage years and began regularly hunting. I

think the descriptions of hunting scenes by Somerville & Ross are some of the best Irish hunting scenes to have been written; as good as Trollope, who was also excellent.

They are also masters of conveying the excitement of a hunt. Here's an excerpt from a description of a fox hunt in "In Mr Knox's Country" (the narrator is Major Yeates and they are observing the action from their car. During the action some cur dogs temporarily mislead the pack in chasing after a donkey): "It was at this moment that I first caught sight of the fox, about fifty yards on the farther side of Casey's assortment of live stock and their guardian cur dogs, gliding over the wall like a cat, and slipping away up the road.

At this point Mr. M'Sweeney, finding the disadvantage of his want of stature, bounded on to the seat beside me and uttered a long yell. 'Hi! At him! Tiger, good dog! Hi! Rosy!'...The fox, as might have been expected, had passed from the ken of the cur dogs, and these, intoxicated by the incitements of their owners, now flung themselves, with the adaptability of their kind, into the pursuit of the donkey. I stopped and looked back. The leading hounds were galloping behind the car; I recognised at their heads Rattler and Roman, the

puppies I had walked, and for a moment was touched by this mark of affection. The gratification was brief. They passed me without a glance, and with anticipatory cries of joy flung themselves into the field and joined in the chase of the donkey.

'They'll kill him!' exclaimed Mrs. Knox, restraining with difficulty the woolly dog; 'what good is Flurry that he can't keep with his hounds!' Galloping hoofs on the road behind us clattered a reply, accompanied by what I can only describe as imprecations on the horn, and Flurry hurtled by and swung his horse into the field over a low bank with all the dramatic fury of the hero rushing to the rescue of the leading lady.

It recalled the incidents that in the palmy days of the Hippodrome gloriously ended in a plunge into deep water, amid a salvo of firearms. In Flurry's wake came the rest of the pack, and with them Dr. Jerome Hickey. 'A great morning's cubbing!' he called out, snatching off his old velvet cap. 'Thirty minutes with an old fox, and now a nice burst with a jackass!' For the next three or four minutes shrieks, like nothing so much as forked lightning, lacerated the air, as the guilty hounds began to receive that which was their due."



No Easy Day In the African Bush

Buffalo hunting is a dangerous business.

There's seldom an easy day's hunting in the African bush. Expecting the unexpected is normal and being constantly on the alert can be the difference between success and failure, or in extreme instances, personal injury. Similarly, being in a malarial area requires medical precautions above and beyond the usual jabs. Critically important too, is taking care of equipment, clothing, footwear - and especially rifles. Choice of appropriate ammunition is vital. Scopes are zeroed in advance; binoculars' lenses cleaned, ample water supplies in the refuelled truck (bakkie) and sun block applied. Being aware of hurriedly short-stroking a rifle bolt, failing to chamber the following round is crucial, and we expect premium ammunition to perform exactly as it says on the box.

However, fourteen years ago I was on a Buffalo hunt where expensive premium ammunition failed miserably and could have resulted in serious trouble. A 50 metre shot that should have been a straightforward kill brought little reaction. Being fully confident in

the bullet's proclaimed performance, I didn't understand why the bull turned and ran in the opposite direction.

Early that afternoon, we had picked up spoor of a medium sized herd of Buffalo. With a Tracker in the lead we set out after it, moving quietly through the bush. Unexpectedly we came face to face with a female which had a calf in tow. Fearing a charge, rifles were raised immediately. Only when we had time to appraise the situation did it become apparent that the buffalo cow was old and in very poor condition. Clearly weakened, she was definitely not physically capable of mounting a charge at perceived intruders as would normally happen with any nursing female. She was in such bad shape it would have been a mercy to put her down on the spot but, with a calf at heel, we couldn't in all conscience do that. The young one deserved every chance possible for survival.

Skirting around the two animals, we continued on our way knowing that unfortunately either a prowling lion (we were in lion country) or a pack of

hyenas could eventually drag one or both buffalos down, bringing matters to a conclusion. Such is the law of the jungle!

Moving on, we eventually caught sight of the main herd deeper in the bush. Glassing the group revealed the master bull along with a younger decent-sized male that would likely be a challenger to the old boy's dominance in the not too distant future. The PH decided that the senior bull was good for a few more years, whereas the younger specimen's boss and horns were sub-standard, so in accordance with good herd management, it became the target animal. It took about forty-five minutes of silent manoeuvring with the wind in our faces to get ourselves into position to take a shot.

At the time I was using a CZ .416 Rigby cal. rifle and was quite experienced with it. The rifle's magazine was loaded with a well-known brand of American-made premium 410grain bullets that I previously bought in Johannesburg and had zeroed the sight with on the day



The Author (left) with Pat and Michael in the bush - note the .416 ammunition.

prior to the hunt. Finding a suitable position, resting on a nearby branch and with the bull facing forward, I squeezed the trigger for what would be considered a straight-forward shot.

There was no time to reload

The sight picture was immediately lost due to heavy recoil and looking up over the scope I fully expected to see the beast on the ground. Instead he was

looking all-around in amazement, before taking off at speed. He had gone so quickly there was no time to reload. We were astonished – I had no doubts whatever about the accuracy of the shot – the PH saw the central chest strike with his binoculars, so there was no rational explanation why it was not a clean one-shot kill.

Some colleagues were within a few miles and the call went out over the

radio that we had a wounded animal on the run – a hunter's worst nightmare. It always results in immediate depressing and self-searching questions. Unwritten hunting ethics demand tracking down a wounded animal no matter how long it takes – sometimes several days. Everyone's efforts are solely concentrated on finding the animal, a situation I was no stranger to as I had been involved in assisting others over the years. Now I was the one asking myself the questions. Thankfully the bull was found and despatched rapidly.

Back at the slaughter-house we examined the carcass minutely and sure enough there was ample evidence of the bullet striking exactly where I had aimed – a perfect chest shot – except that the round had clearly disintegrated on impact. In other words, it failed. Under different circumstances that could have been quite a serious situation. Thankfully this did not arise.

In view of the failure of an expensive premium bullet specifically designed for deep penetration and expansion, I wrote by registered post to the manufacturers in the USA enclosing details of the failure, ammunition batch number, plus photographs of the impact marks on the



Termite mounds provide useful cover.



Organising the follow-up.

buffalo. No reply was ever received.

In following years the incident was occasionally mentioned by some members of the hunting fraternity in South Africa asking if there had been any response. The answer remained unchanged – no reply from the manufacturers. As time rolled on, that day became just another memory, refreshed only when looking at photographs or video footage of old hunts. Until Christmas 2010 that is!

That December I bought an interesting book – “Dangerous Game Rifles” by well-known Canadian Journalist and Hunter Terry Wieland, with a foreword by the even more famous PH Robin Hurt. Both of their careers will be familiar to anyone interested in Dangerous Game Hunting.

In my opinion they are the modern equivalent of Karamojo Bell, Harry Selby, Finn Aagaard etc.

They changed a small but important component

The book was particularly interesting – especially the chapters on bullet construction. A bullet, same brand as that which failed in my .416, was featured in black and white photographs - and the text was revealing. Apparently, some years back the manufacturers had taken over a well-known company that produced expensive premium bullets and began producing their own version of these rounds. In doing so they changed a small but important component in the construction process, resulting in the bullet frequently

disintegrating or becoming malformed on impact, to the point of being useless.

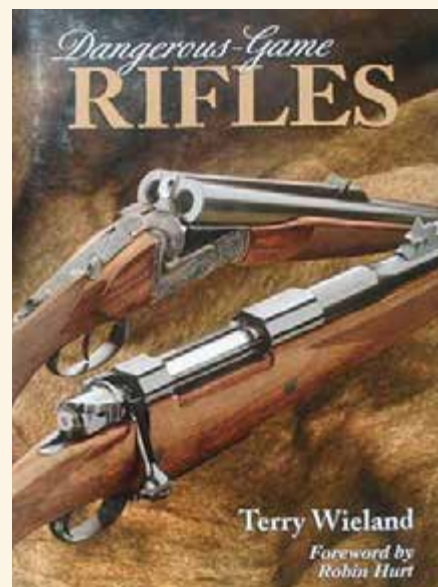
One of the USA’s most respected Dangerous Game hunters and Shooting Sports writers, Craig Boddington, had spotted the problem, as did other prominent shooters. Having carried out a series of tests using this ammunition they brought their concerns to the attention of the manufacturers who acted swiftly to rectify the situation. Too late for some hunters, including moi!

I have no recollection or knowledge of any publicity, recall notices or warnings to anyone taking on Dangerous Game that these bullets could be problematic. The question arises if retailers were ever notified about the unreliable bullet, if stocks were ever withdrawn from sale worldwide, or even if the manufacturers were aware of the fault prior to Boddington’s tests. I don’t know the answers. My box of 20 was bought in Johannesburg’s “The Powder Keg” whose owners, the late Lucas and Wendy Potgieter, were personal friends. I know that Lucas would have instantly returned any ammunition with a question hanging over it to the wholesalers, had he been aware; he most definitely would not have allowed it to be sold. We’ll probably never know the full story.

That hunt was no easy day in the African bush - and the unexpected turned up too!



Retrieving the Buffalo.



Inside was explained the bullet malfunction.

Terrier, Lurcher and Whippet Show Roundup

Avondhu Foxhounds Dog Show Sunday 31st March

What a fantastic turnout at the GAIN sponsored Avondhu Foxhounds Show held at the Event Center, Corrin, Fermoy, Co Cork. The quality of dogs in the rings was second to none and a credit to their owners.

Showing Results

Five Nations

Phil Owen's with his Champion Lurcher Eva; Mark Delaney with his Champion Whippet Junior -

Overall Show Champion & Five Nations Qualifier Eamo Mc Erlain with Sprigy; Phil Owens with Eva

Lurcher Phil Owens with Eva
Terrier Eamo Mc Erlain with Sprigy
Whippet Mark Delaney with Junior
Hound Kevin Casey with Torton
Gundog Alanna Flynn with Blaze
Overall Show Champion Eamo Mc Erlain with Sprigy

The Avondhu Foxhounds Show members would like to thank Judges Jim Dalton / Whippets; Niall Healy / Lurchers: John Sweeney / Hounds; Maurice Keane / Terriers; Barry O Connell / Gundogs; and Stacey O Dwyer / Pets.

It was a bitter sweet event as a true advocate of field work Noel Lambe sadly passed away unexpectedly late last year. Noel was a very popular man in the hound community and this was evident with the huge turnout at his funeral. Noel's family are well known in the area and up to a couple of years ago had the oldest pack of foot beagles in the country. It was a very poignant moment when Noel's daughter Ailish, presented the Noel Lambe Perpetual Cup in Noel's memory to Kevin Casey from the Galtee Foxhounds for Best Overall Hound. I would also like to thank all the Avondhu Hunt members involved who gave up their time and effort to help make this day a roaring success. Report by Sean O Keffe

Carlow Charity Dog Show and Raceday (Stephanie O Connor's Show) 7th April

The event raised €1951 for Carlow

Mental Health Association. Excellent work Stephanie and Mark, a credit to you and congratulations on a first class, first time run show.

Racing Results

Master McGrath over 23

Michael McGrath with Tucker; Conor Nolan with Jodie; Eddie Kane with Scooter
Master McGrath under 23

Billy Cullen with Shadow; Joe Leonard with Bruno; Joe Leonard with Jack
Mick the Miller

Eddie Kane with Snowy; Fran Kenny with Teabag; Fran Kenny with PJ

Master McGrath

P Hempenstall; Billy Cullen; Charlene Rafferty with Shifter

Under 21" Paddy McGrath with Amber; Joe Leonard with Elsa; Paddy McGrath with Robby

Hairy dogs Eddie Kane with Fonk; Michael McGrath with Stella; Conor Nolan with Prince

Whippet Alex Savage with Murphy; Barry Chambers with Alfie; Anthony McGrath with blue

Under 23" Joe Leonard with Bruno; Joe Leonard with Jack; Seamus Moore with Mindy.

Over 23" Kirsty Harpur with Megan; Michael McGrath with Black Jack

Showing Results

Champion Whippet Rea Wilson with Otis; Jade Dunphy with Willow

Champion Terrier Eamo Mc Erlain with Spooky; Mark Mc Callion with Pinky

Champion Lurcher Dog Jed Donagh with Jake; Eoin Barnes

Champion Lurcher Bitch Tracy Crosbie with Stella; Eoin Barnes

Champion Hound Kilkenny Foxhound with Harver; Kilkenny Foxhounds with Subtle

Five Nations

Whippet Rea Wilson with Otis

Terrier Eamo Mc Erlain with Spooky

Lurcher Jed Donagh with Jake.

Overall Show Champion Eamo Mc Erlain

with Spooky' Jed Donagh with Jake

Many thanks to the judges: Pets / Margaret Mc Stay Whippet / Charlene Rafferty Lurcher Dog / Gary Smith Lurcher Bitch / Brian Grady Hounds / Johnny Dicker Terriers / James McGuinness and Racing Michael and Jack McGrath.

Abbeylax Lurcher, Terrier, Whippet and Hound Dog Show and Race Day 14th April

Racing Results

Master McGrath over 23"

Mark O Connor with Bear; PJ Nolan with Missy; Conor Nolan with Jody
Mick the Miller

Michael McGrath with Amber; Eddy Kane with Scooter; Conor Nolan with Prince

Open Whippet Alex Savage with Murphy; Barry Chambers with Jill; Paddy McGrath with Bobby

Bullcross Jed Donagh with Chunk; Patrick Hempenstall with Billy; Conor Nolan with Tyson

U21 Paddy McGrath with Amber; Larry Connors with Rose

Open Lurcher Nicky Smith Scooby; Michael McGrath with Tucker; Kirsty Harpur with Sky

Showing Results

Pets Willie O Meara with Rodge; Gail Canning with Roe

Whippets Champion Whippet Alex Savage with Murphy; Amanda Delaney with Penny

Terriers Champion Terrier Philip Dalton with Jess; Trevor Moody with Lucy

Lurchers Champion Lurcher Jed Donagh with Jake; John Keane with Glin

Hounds Champion Hound Adrienne Frost-Treadwell with Duhalla Lady 2017

Champion Veteran Mark Delaney with Junior; David Nolan with Julie

Overall Show Champion Jed Donagh with Jake; Adrienne Frost-Treadwell with Duhalla Lady 2017

Many thanks to the judges for a job well done. Despite the terrible weather, Brian and Charmaine Grady and team produced a top class event.



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Willie O Meara with the Abbeyleix Pet Show Champion Rodge.



(Left)
Steven
Jackson with
his winning
Whippet with
Judge Kirsty
Harpur at
Abbeyleix.



Overall Show Champion Eamo McErlain with Sprigy at Avondhu.



(Below)
John McStay
and Billy Kerry
with their
winning
Whippet Pairs at
Abbeyleix.



Mark Delaney with his Champion Whippet Junior at Avondhu.



Elk Hunting in Colorado

The author (centre) with guides Zach Workman and Ryan Solomon.

As I stared at the bull through the scope, I knew this would be my last chance to tag out. There were – as always – any number of reasons why it might slip through my fingers: it was the end of a long week of hard hunting; I was tired; I was tense; I could feel the cold creeping through my fingers, stiffening them joint-by-joint. I took a slow, deep breath and curled my forefinger around the trigger...

Elk hunting is all about chances: sometimes you just need to spot them, other times you need to go all out to create them, and you always need to take them. And this herd bull, who had paused briefly 150 yards below us, was my chance: the culmination of a week of effort and exertion, and years of anticipation.

This expedition to Colorado was originally planned for 2015. Initially, I had to push it back to 2017 due to the arrival of my eldest daughter. A further postponement was then needed when a second daughter decided to join us. When elk season 2018 came around, I was determined to make every moment count.

I opted for a guided hunt on private

land to maximise my chances.

Following glowing recommendations, I booked with Full Draw Outfitters, run by renowned bow-hunter Fred Eichler and his wife Michele. They couldn't have been more helpful and their own passion for hunting gave me a good feeling about the trip from the very start.

I have to confess, though, that my spirits took a bit of a dive when I surveyed the scene around our spike camp in Las Animas County. The sight of blackened conifers was a sobering reminder of the nature's power, as was the pervading presence of dust and soot from the fire, which quickly coated everything from my eyelashes to my horse's rump. The flip side to this, as my guides soon pointed out, was that the fire's destruction of dense overhead canopies had allowed meadows and grasses to flourish, which, as my guides were keen to point out, was highly attractive to grazers such as elk.

As we set about making plans and the campfire crackled away, my spirits were well and truly rising once more. It's hard to be glum when you have the promise of good food, good company

and five days – ten outings – to fill your elk tag.

From the first, it was clear that I had a top team at my side. My guides, Zach Workman and Ryan Solomon couldn't have been less alike in terms of personality. Ryan was larger – and louder – than life: all boisterous backwoods charm, were perfectly offset by his devotion to his young family. Zach was more of a subtle, silent type: his big, thoughtful eyes assessing and analysing, before making any softly spoken contribution to campfire conversations. There was one thing they undoubtedly had in common though, and that was a passion for elk hunting.

Equally vital to my mission was Fred and Michele Eichler's son, Jeb, who was master of the cook tent (and slept in it at night to defend our supplies from bears). Thanks to Jeb, I tried an array of local game dishes that rarely, if ever, make the menus on my side of the Atlantic, including mouthwatering mountain lion nuggets and bear chilli. Empty stomachs aren't auspicious for bringing home elk, and, even though I munched my way through a mountain of Clif bars, I don't think I could have



Plans were made as the campfire crackled.

hunted half as hard or as long without full rations of Jeb's hearty cooking.

He's an almost supernatural ability to negotiate the treacherous terrain

My final companion for the expedition was Caspar, a gentle old grey gelding who had the courage of a young lion. When offered a choice of mount, I knew instantly that he was the one for me. Though he was at the bottom of the

equine pecking order (with scars to show for it), he was as friendly as his ghostly namesake and had an almost supernatural ability to negotiate the treacherous terrain we had to cross. His trusting nature was immensely reassuring when the going was tricky and helped me keep my focus firmly on the task at hand.

Throughout our first few outings, we saw plenty of fresh sign, so we knew there were elk about. This was a good

omen, I thought, as we picked our way on horseback through the rough landscape, which still bore so many scars of the fires of five years ago. Thanks to my guides, I had begun to appreciate that the flames' legacy wasn't entirely negative. Not only had it allowed the regeneration of low-growing grasses to benefit elk and other grazers, the thinning of the foliage meant that it was possible to spot animals at greater distances.

We saw some sizeable elk herds on the far slopes. While they wouldn't help me tag out, they did give me an opportunity to test my new Leica Geovid HD-B 3000 rangefinders. Able to range even further than their predecessors, they had no trouble telling me that the herd I was watching was a mile-and-a-half away.

Closer at hand, there was an abundance of wildlife, much of which was fascinatingly exotic to me: mountain lions, wild turkeys, stunning blue jays, fearless chipmunks, and even black bear. Some of it seemed unusually keen to join us: there was almost always a raven present – which I took as a good sign that we looked to be likely creators of carrion.



With the Leica binoculars I could see the herd a mile-and-a-half away.

We alternated hunts on horseback and on foot, leading our mounts when the going was too treacherous even for their expert hooves. I've spent most of my life around horses in Britain, and the pluckiest I've seen when it comes to tackling difficult ground are those used for foxhunting, but the bravery of our steeds on this hunt was something else again. Without batting an eyelid, they crossed terrain that I would have thought impossible, thinking nothing of the jagged wooden spikes, vicious thorns and half-hidden logs that littered the ground as nature set about re-greening after the fires.

With all this, I wasn't short of things to keep my senses on high alert and my adrenaline flowing, but we had yet to get close to any elk. As we passed the halfway point of the week and reached the third afternoon, doubts began to creep in. I tried to ignore them and busied myself with camp chores. The ever-present ravens now began to bother me and I began to wonder if they were a bad omen rather than a predictor of success.

As the sun sank behind the peaks, the warmth drained rapidly away and I began to layer-up for the evening's hunt. Then Ryan's phone rang. I stopped – pullover number three halfway over my head. It was Fred. Someone had spotted an enormous herd of elk at his ranch. He suggested we come off the mountain and head there right away.

Soon we were flying along in Ryan's



An elk bull as the sun sank behind the peaks.

truck, Chris Stapleton on the radio, a cornucopia of tobacco, wind powder, measuring tapes and other essentials rattling about on the console. I stared out of the window as I listened to Ryan's jokes, searching for any sign of our quarry between the modern oil derricks and the historic slag piles and brick-built coke-ovens that testified to the area's coal mining past.

The truck's headlights picked out the shape of a bull elk

A few hours later, we were rumbling home and my spirits were in danger of falling as fast as the temperature. We were still empty handed. Then, a mere mile from camp, just as I was bracing myself for another night shivering in my sleeping bag, the truck's headlights picked out the shape I had been longing

to see: a bull elk. He stood frozen in the beam for a few moments, before disappearing. Finally, we had a lead.

The intervening hours couldn't pass quickly enough, and the moon was still high as we left camp the following morning. We were in a world of moody, monochrome shadows, the flat top of Fisher's Peak looming darkly above us as the pick up snaked its way along the access roads once more.

Dawn broke, and the pursuit began in earnest. Up to this point, every outing had been physically testing, but on this morning in particular, we covered a lot of ground. At one point, we found ourselves within 20 yards of a group of elk cows that had been bumped by some stray dogs. They were so close that I could see their breath steaming in the pale morning light, and could appreciate just how big they were compared with the deer I was used to in the UK. Ryan's knowledge of the wind and ability to use it was phenomenal, and we were able to take advantage of high ground to observe a couple of solitary bulls at a distance, but, frustratingly, there wasn't anything that offered a viable prospect.

Heading back to camp, however, we saw our bull again. Quickly, Ryan cow-called him while I dropped to my knees and centred my target in the scope. The bull stopped briefly. I squeezed off a shot, but he moved and my bullet buried itself in the earth behind him. The raven that seemed to be following me croaked loudly.



The first shot had hit home.



Every ounce was appreciated - the perfect end to the trip.

We tried again that evening but were defeated by darkness. Suddenly I was down to my last card – one outing left. Even Ryan’s sense of humour couldn’t shift my gloom that night and I finally fell into a fitful sleep with the sense of foreboding that only an unfilled tag can bring.

I saw that one was the herd bull

For the last time, in the frozen gloom of the following morning, I pulled on my layers, laced up my boots, and

followed Zach out of camp. The exertion was just beginning to warm me up when he stopped so suddenly that I almost cannoned into him. There, on the edge of a creek below us, was a whole herd of elk. They were already beginning to move on, however. “There, that one, that’s the herd bull,” whispered Zach, urgently. I knew this would be my last chance, and that I would have to be quick to make it count.

Bringing the rifle smoothly to my shoulder, I steadied the bull in the scope and closed my cold finger around the

trigger and put all distractions from my mind. As the first shot hit home, he staggered. I cycled the bolt and sent another round after the first. He dropped on the spot.

The bark of a raven brought me back to earth after an initial moment of disbelief. I laughed to myself as I felt tiredness and tension transform into a sense of elation: perhaps the clever, soot-coloured birds had known all along that we’d be successful.

One vital task remained: to pack out the meat. For this, as for so much, the horses proved to be worth their weight in gold. The elk was a 6x7, a great mature animal. Sadly, taking the meat back to the UK with me was never going to be possible, so when planning the trip I’d done some research to ensure that none of it would be wasted. The nearest town to our hunting grounds was Aguilar, with a population of just 580, a quarter of whom lived below the poverty line. With the help of Full Draw Outfitters, Ryan and Zach, I’d found a family which would be truly grateful for such a richly nutritious gift. The knowledge that every ounce would be appreciated was the perfect end to the trip, and it was worth every cent of the \$300 it cost to process the meat.

Factfile

The Rocky Mountain Elk, or *Cervus Canadensis nelsoni* is one of six species of elk that originally inhabited the North American continent. Also known as wapiti (the Shawnee Indian term for the animals), the elk population has had to adapt to survive. It’s thought that they were plains animals, and their herding behaviour is more akin to open country animals, but they now can be found in forest cover.

Bulls start bugling as temperatures change, in September, signalling the start of the rut.

The elk in Colorado came under severe pressure during the gold rush, and in the early years of the 20th century leaving between 500 and 1,000 elk. Colorado halted elk hunting through most of the state, with new animals introduced between 1912 and 1928 by the Colorado Department for Game and Fish. The elk population rebounded and today it’s estimated that there is a population of 280,000 in Colorado, the largest in America. Understandably, these large numbers can cause overgrazing.

Around 250,000 hunters go out in pursuit of elk each year in Colorado, harvesting around 50,000 of the animals.

This hunt cost \$8,000 + 10% tip. Plus you’ll need to buy an over-the-counter tag from Cabela’s which costs \$660. For more information, email Michele and Fred via fulldrawoutfitters@gmail.com.

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4.5kg £12.00

Mix 4

Beef and Duck

Minced beef, honeycomb green tripe, duck with bone, liver, kidney

Just A Little Bird



New found obedience had produced a good result.

Whilst out shooting last season, I had a stark reminder of a couple of old sayings ‘a gun dog is never fully trained’ and the second being ‘sometimes it’s the tiniest things that trip us up.’ And quite literally on this particular excursion with a young spaniel, it was the tiniest of wild game birds, the snipe, that did exactly that. Luckily for me, I was able to go back to the drawing board so to speak and correct my oversight as regards an over enthusiastic young driven spaniel that had never before encountered a snipe in her young unfolding life.

There are people who would travel miles for the instinctive, fast reaction sport that is snipe shooting and for anyone who would like to try it take my advice be prepared to firstly take plenty of cartridges with you and secondly see your cartridge to kill ratio take the biggest nose dive possible for to say

they are hard to hit is something of a cavernous understatement even for people who are quite accomplished shots .

Just to relate to you the particular incident in question, whilst out hunting for one of our most popular quarries, the woodcock, I decided to take a shortcut across a quite big piece of bog ground over to the next likely looking woodcock cover, without a thought of what would unfold over the next few minutes. Of course the young spaniel continued to quarter beautifully five to ten yards in front of me, perfect for a great rough shooting dog, when inevitably she flushed the first snipe.

Snipe, like the flick of a switch can entice and encourage a young hot headed spaniel to give chase with total belief that this tiny bird, twisting, turning, jinking, flying provocatively at the dog’s head height can definitely be

caught. All would and maybe could be salvaged as I blew the recall whistle with as much gusto as humanly possible, but the worst thing about snipe is there can be lots of them and at times you would imagine that they had been purposely planted like a string of gun dog mind blowing explosives. And of course, just as she began to heed the order to return as the first tiny bird was now out of sight, up sprang reinforcements one after another.

So now I’m left in total certainty that no amount of whistle blowing is going to stop this deaf eared spaniel and neither it did, as she sped furiously about flushing every snipe that the bog was home to. Eventually the realisation came over her that maybe this was not quite the behaviour expected of her and she finally decided to come racing back to the re call whistle, tail wagging furiously, eyes wide and heart racing, a

lolling tongue hanging out, expecting a greeting of 'well done girl.'

Positive and patient training

I think when the lead appeared and other words were uttered that she may have heard once or twice in her younger days, the tail wagging slowed to an occasional wag. We always train our spaniels in a positive loving patient manner and in over 40 years of training have firmly concluded that this is the only way to train gun dogs, so the worst thing to happen was her ego was dented with a few harsh words and she was 'jailed' by the lead.

As with all types of quarry, I must mention at this point that other breeds of gun dog such as pointers and setters would be and probably are far better suited for snipe shooting. Even being a passionate spaniel man, I can definitely admire the elegance and poise of a pointer or setter fixated and seemingly paralysed on its quarry. It is a beautiful but exciting sight to behold and when inevitably the deadlock is broken as the bird rises and the gun tries to follow the incredible evasive flight pattern of this tiny bird. More often than not, the whole scenario ends with two empty cartridges and a last look of disbelief as it flies away, totally unscathed by its encounter with man, gun and dog .



With our type of shooting we need the dog to reappear from the cover.

I suppose by always living by the hunter gatherer code and ethics, that if I am not going to eat it I am certainly not going to shoot it. I could have excused myself for not including or taking into account this beautiful little wading bird as anything more than a nuisance whilst training if happened upon quite by accident, but with this young spaniel it did highlight the fact that even though I thought she was extremely steady on recall and the stop whistle, it had just appeared now with this experience that she wasn't.

Most people who have trained

spaniels may be shouting now at these pages - 'you should be training stop to flush or shot' - which, yes in most areas and terrain is quite right and proper. But in our particular area and with our main game bird being the woodcock it is not just as straightforward as it might seem. For when your spaniels spend most of the hunting day within dense arduous cover trying to flush a bird out of it, it is ridiculous to expect or try to train stop to flush whilst the dog is within the cover using its own natural abilities, initiative and intelligence and totally out of sight, only working to and

listening for the whistle. Also with stop to shot, with our type of shooting and tall wild cover we need the dog to reappear from the cover on hearing the shot as fast as possible, to be able to retrieve any bird that has been shot. It's amazing just how far a winged woodcock or cock pheasant can run in a very short space of time making a reasonably easy enough retrieve into one

*Daniel O'Flaherty's
Pepper - other breed may
be better suited for snipe
shooting than spaniels.*





Ruby was back with the snipe in a flash.

that requires a spaniel to be at the top of its game in searching for runners. So with all this mind we train very robustly on the stop whistle and recall.

Obviously the stop whistle can be used at any time to manually replace the stop to flush and shot, so hence my reason why I don't waste time trying to train it.

I find a few yards away is enforceable, while 50 yards is not

So back to Ruby our young springer. I have found over the years that you can't correct a fault in a dog's behaviour until the dog is actually committing the act of wrongdoing which, coupled with the my theory of 'never give a command to a dog in training that you can't enforce.' By this I mean distance-wise, a few yards away is enforceable while 50 yards is not so whilst training. Work in short distances at all times.

Later that week, we headed back to the snipe ground with the little lady on the lead and then walked the bog until we found the first snipe which burst into

flight with its shrill alarm call. Ruby's instinct again was to chase but being at the ready as she lunged forward with a sharp check and blow of the stop whistle she sat with a quiet murmur of discontent. After about eight snipe she was no longer lurching but watching the flush and sitting on the whistle command. The second training session a few days later began on the lead and then trusting her to walk to heel without the lead all went well. After seven or eight flushes for the final five minutes, I risked a quick bit of hunting which included two commands of down to stop on the whistle but no flushes. I knew if she had flushed and chased we would have to start the cycle all over again.

The next session we started again on the lead, then off the lead and then hunting. Just as I was going to recall her from a fairly close distance, up sprang a snipe a few meters ahead of her. As I blew the whistle she ran a yard or two and put herself down to stop. Not showing my pleasure as she had still run

in a very short distance, I walked to her put the lead on and returned her back to where she should have dropped, blew the stop whistle, walked back to my original position and recalled her and only then she was praised.

Over the next couple of weeks, we worked on this several times until I felt the time was right to take the gun along. I didn't shoot at the first two snipe, consciously letting them fly on and concentrating on the stop. Everything was perfect, so upon the next flush I shot and hit the snipe. As I saw it tumble earthwards I blew Ruby to stop and she did I further tested her new found obedience and blew her to recall and once sitting in front of me and after praising the dog I decided to call it a day.

Of course even though it had served a purpose for me for training that beautiful little bird did not go waste, as it was given to a person who loves to eat them, with whom I have joked on many an occasion he must not have a very large appetite!



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'RIOT' WINS ESS NATIONAL OPEN CHAMPIONSHIP U.S.A

Pre-National Training with Field Champions Riot, Alder and Dudley on a cold, snowy Iowa day.

The 2018 US National Open Championship for English Springer Spaniels was won by NFC FC AFC Crosswinds Comic Relief, call name Riot, which is owned by Kevin and Elizabeth Battistoni of Millbrook, New York and handled by myself out of Craney Hill Kennel in Mitchell, Georgia.

Riot displayed a dominating performance over the five-day event held in Cambridge, Maryland; besting a 100-dog entry of qualifying dogs from across the United States and completing five land series and water retrieves. As dominating as Riot was against the other National qualifiers, it is the history of this dog's development that breaks the mould of today's typical field trial competitor in the United States.

Briefly, the field trial world has become a specialty for field trial competitors with few of them spending much time hunting until later in life,

once their field trial career is over. Those that do hunt are seldom allowed to become gun dogs and are "hunted" only for very brief periods measured in minutes so that they do not learn to pace themselves at a more moderate level. Handlers tend to also set the hunt up to control as much of the situation as they can. Riot's development was shaped in a much different, longer-view program focused on a strong relationship with his handler and creating a gun dog as the primary focus.

Once Riot's litter was whelped in 2012, Betsey began the process of imprinting her importance with him. She worked on some basic obedience, house rules and confidence-building across the countryside. At nine-months of age, she sent Riot to Craney Hill Kennel for the start of his formal development. For four months, Riot's development was focused of creating a strong foundation of confidence mixed

with a "serviceable" level of obedience. Most of the development was focused on an introduction of, and gaining confidence on gamebirds. Gun introduction was completed and Riot was sent home as a young gun dog at 13-months of age. Betsey continued his critical development by allowing Riot to become a more experienced gun dog without "breaking" his spirit with an electric collar. She enhanced their relationship by providing Riot opportunities to make mistakes and learn without apprehension.

At 18-months of age, Riot returned to Craney Hill Kennel for advanced training. Over the next three months, the process of getting Riot steady to wing and shot was completed and a more formal ground coverage was learned to create an "invisible" leash between the handler and Riot. Betsey made a trip to Craney Hill Kennel to observe and learn how to best work with Riot. Riot was



Riot at the ready.

sent home to New York and Betsey took over for the next two years.

Betsey's development of the dog, with my continued consultation, over the next two years was critical. She entered him in a few Amateur All-Age Field Trials and scratched out a couple of placements. Often times, she was quite frustrated that a dog believed to be very blessed with talent would struggle to complete the field trial...but she displayed tremendous trust in our development process. As instructed, she continued to run Riot in a true hunting environment with a variety of covers and gamebirds. She would run Riot for an hour instead of just ten minutes. Then, depression set in!

Developing a spaniel is not creating a robot

All of the 'opportunity' she provided Riot led to an incredibly powerful and confident bird-finding gun dog. At a field trial in New York, Riot ran off on Betsey. Frustrated, she put him in our truck to send to Georgia and she went home. She did not even wait around to watch Riot's littermate win the trial! What Betsey did not realise is that she was doing things right. Developing a spaniel is not creating a robot. Most important, it is creating a confident animal that understands its job is to find birds. If the spaniel is very talented, it can, and should result in periods when the dog stretches out and pushes the

envelope on you. If the development has been successful, it is just a matter of "resetting" the spaniel's frame of mind without the negative result of breaking its spirit. In the United States, this is important because we do not have the amount of game that they do in the UK. Our dogs must stretch out to find game and there is less risk in passing other game.

Riot spent the summer back at Craney Hill Kennel reconnecting the communication between him and the handler. He was now a mature dog ready to win! The dog was returned to Betsey in September and she started working him at home again. Betsey and Riot spent time in Maine at Grouse Camp with us chasing grouse and woodcock. One week after leaving Grouse Camp, Betsey and Riot won the prestigious Parent Club Field Trial! This was Riot's second win and awarded him his Amateur Field Champion title. Riot had a good Amateur and Open National in 2016 with Betsey but things did not pan out. The 2017 trial season looked to be promising, but things did not pan out...in placements anyway. However, a lot was learned about this mature dog and his tendencies, his concerns and mutual communication.

Hunting had turned him into a very polished gun dog

Betsey sent Riot back to me to run the early trials in Texas and Tennessee in 2018 and the results were mixed. There were a couple of placements to get the dog qualified for the National Open Championship. He was then sent home for the summer to relax and very little was done with him. Betsey ran a couple of Amateur trials in the fall and then he came back to Craney Hill Kennel for pre-National training. Riot, as well as all the other All-Age spaniels, spent most of October and one-half of November hunting wild pheasants. The only thing Riot did, day after day, was to either walk at heel while other dogs worked in front of him or hunted while other dogs walked at heel. After two or three weeks, I called Betsey and told her



Todd and Riot having a quiet moment before they run in the field trial.

that Riot had it. He was a different dog and he was going to be very difficult to beat. Hunting that much had turned him into a very polished gun dog. A very confident producer of wild game and a

patient, quite gentleman waiting for his turn.

In December, Riot won the 2018 National Open Championship for English Springer Spaniels. It was a very

impressive week for him and he exhibited bird-finding, pace, drive, style and a connection with his handler that was superior. I must admit that my knees were weak for the last four days



Betsey and Riot in the Maine woods with their first woodcock together.



Group group training/heeling while hunting in Iowa.

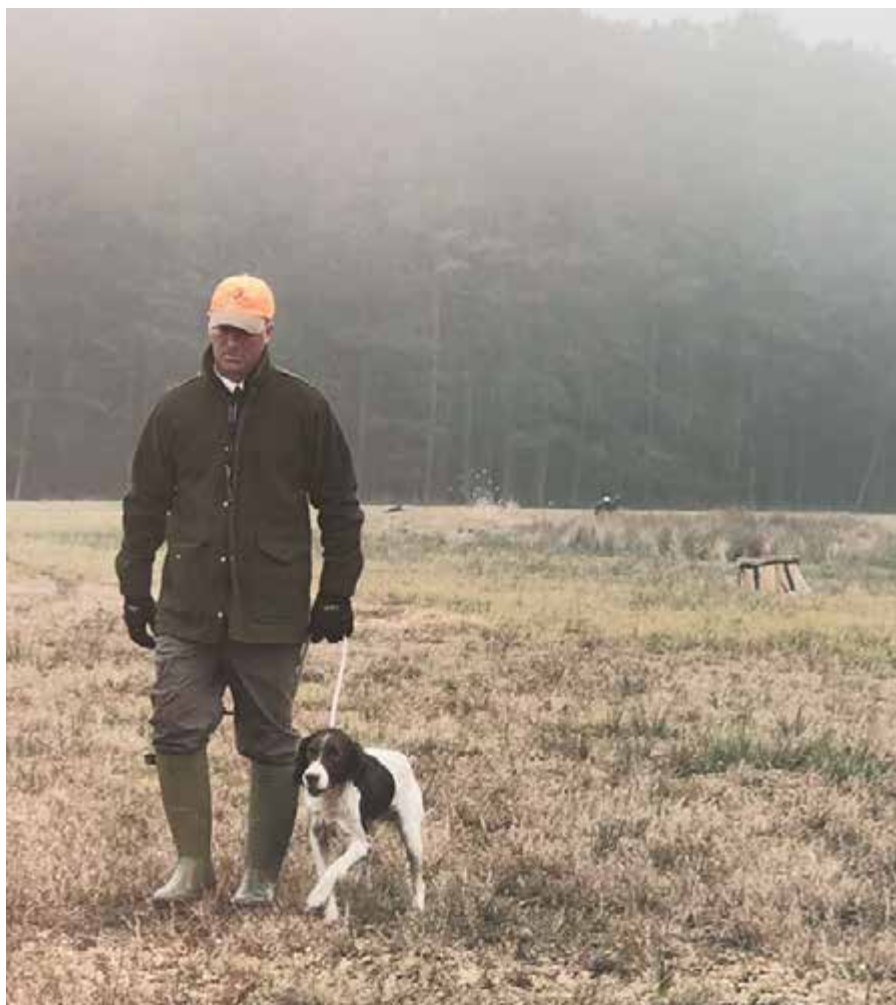
of the National. I knew we were doing well and if it continued, we were likely going to be in the conversation. However, I did not sleep the rest of the week as the nerves increased. When you are not doing well it is relatively easy and the expectation is low. When you are doing well the pressure grows. Riot was one of the last dogs to run the last series (water series). It was a blur as I tried to hold it together. I immediately left to feed and exercise other dogs, but primarily to get away from the grounds.

There was a fair bit of nervousness on display at the awards ceremony. The judges said a few words and then announced four Certificate of Merits. The last one was awarded to one of our other dogs Dudley. It was at this point that I was confident we would get a placement as I had Riot quite a bit above Dudley in his work. Next was Fourth Place to our friend and peer Dan Murry, then Third Place to our friend and peer Ralph Botti. Second Place was then awarded to a Canadian amateur handler, and true gentleman, Jeffrey Cubitt. It became official, Riot had won! I was truly speechless. The rest of the ceremony is somewhat of a blur but I do remember what was most impressive to me. The response from my peers was unexpected. Without naming professionals, with the risk of missing someone

that so warmly congratulated us, there was true happiness out of many of them. Competitors that not only want to win, but hate to lose! I cannot thank them enough for their grace and I only hope I can be as gracious when the shoe is on the other foot.

This is the pinnacle of the story, but hopefully the two most important lessons will not be lost in the results of the competition. Riot's culmination in winning the Championship was only possible because of two things: Betsey's commitment and patience in his proper development and providing Riot an opportunity to become a gun dog. I may have handled Riot to the win, but Betsey worked with Riot for the bulk of his life. She may have been helped during that time, but Betsey put the work in, followed instructions and trusted the process. In Riot's six-plus years of life, he was continuously worked in a hunting environment, not a controlled dog training/field trial set up. He was asked to perform a lot of gun dog tasks that are not typically part of the training of a field trial dog. He hunted grouse, woodcock and wild pheasants, not just pen raised or liberated gamebirds.

For anyone looking for a spaniel, but does not want a field trial dog, you would be lucky to hunt over Riot. Riot has proven that a talented dog is capable of many things, be it a gun dog or a field trial dog. They should be the same thing separated only by talent, not expectation. It would behoove the entire spaniel world if everyone would learn from Riot's success and strive for the same expectation from both our gun dogs and our field trial competitors.



National Completed - Todd and Riot finished the water portion of the National. Such a relief to have finished. Now it's up to the judges.



Riot wins! Todd is speechless & the owner Betsey had tears of joy.

Spring Revival



Piper getting out and quartering with serious intent.

There is a sort of magic about getting back onto the moor for the first time after the winter. There is a faint, almost invisible, hint of green starting to show in the hedgerows and the daffodils on the roadside are like drifts of yellow sunshine. As we get close to the moors of the north Pennine we see plumes of smoke drifting and catch a whiff of burning heather. It is the middle of March and we are about to start our first grouse counts of the season.

There is always a slight sense of trepidation on the first day back on the hill. Will the pointers have remembered their manners during the six months or so since they were last worked? Will the grouse sit tightly so the dogs can hold their points, or will they be running through the heather and jumping wild encouraging the dogs to chase? Are the dogs fit enough to get through a day's work? This year we had a rather bigger worry on our minds as this was to be Piper's first day back on the hill after

nine months spent recovering from his accident.

Piper is a pointer who was owned, trained and trialled by Alan Neill that doyen of Irish birddog handlers. Last July, as Alan was on his way to the summer pointer and setter trial circuit his vehicle was hit by a lorry and Alan was killed. He had twelve pointers and setters with him of which two were killed, two seriously injured and one lost in the Galloway countryside for almost a week before being rescued. Because we live fairly close to the scene of the accident we became involved in the sad business of sorting out the dogs. Most of the surviving dogs went back to their owners, but Piper came home with us initially and has stayed ever since.

Piper had a dislocated hock with severe damage to the tendons. Our local vet offered us three alternatives: amputation; fusing the joint or surgery to try to repair the joint so that it might be possible for him to work again. The surgery would have to be carried out by

a specialist – Andrew Miller in Stirling – and would be very expensive: around £4,000 to £5,000 was the estimate and it would have to be done as soon as possible.

It was at this moment that we discovered just how highly Alan was held in the esteem of his friends in the pointer and setter world. First Sue Langford made an 'executive decision' that we should arrange the surgery regardless and then explore ways of meeting the cost. Linda Westron came up with the answer by opening an appeal on social media which raised the necessary funds in just a couple of days thanks to the generosity of the hundreds of people who made donations, large and small, including many who had never known Alan but were moved by the story and the plight of Piper and the other dogs. The operation was carried out two days later: we brought Piper back home with instructions to keep him quiet and steady for the next six weeks.

Another visit to Andrew Miller and further scans showed the surgery had been successful: now it was time to start the long process of rehabilitation and a return to fitness. Luckily there was enough money left in the fund to cover regular hydrotherapy sessions and consultations with a canine physiotherapist who set up a programme of daily exercises designed to gradually increase the strength and mobility of his injured leg. Finally, after six months being kept on a lead he finally got to run free again making his way up and down our lane somewhat tentatively but quickly becoming more confident. And now the real test was to come as he had his first run on the hill for almost a year.

We watched, hearts in mouths

The plan was to pick a nice, flat area with short heather and just let him have two or three gentle casts. Piper, however, had a different plan and as soon as Georgie told him to 'Get on' he took off at full throttle and started quartering as if he was back running in the Champion Stake. It was hearts in mouths for a few minutes: he was turning nicely on the whistle but ignored any attempts to bring him back in and cut his run short. He had waited a long time for this and was determined to make the most of it. Eventually, after what seemed like an age but was really only a few minutes, he came on to point and Georgie was able to pick him up. He looked very pleased with himself. I was blinking back a tear.

He has been out two or three times since and worked well. Like most pointers and setters there is no 'go slow' button but after that first foray he now comes back in and drops when he is told so we can limit the amount of work he does at any one time. The grouse will be settling down to nest soon so we can spend the next three months working on his fitness ready for July when we should be back on the moors for the

(Right) Georgina watches as Piper is put through his exercises in the hydrotherapy pool.



A well bandaged Piper needed to be kept on the lead for 6 months.



brood counts and the summer trials circuit, all leading up to shooting in August.

Our spring counts have been encouraging. Last year with the 'Beast from the East' most of the counts were cancelled and the following drought meant that many moors shot little if at all. This spring the weather has been kinder, though strong winds on almost every day we have been on the hill have made the grouse very lively and liable to jump as soon as a dog gets close: not good if you are running a young dog and trying to steady it up.

As ever it was a real pleasure to see the variety of bird life to be found on a well-kept moor. The opponents of grouse shooting claim that grouse moors are mono-cultures where only a single species thrives: those of us who actually spend time on the hill know just how wrong they are.



The photograph shows Piper's his first point on his return to the grouse moors.



The counting team well wrapped up on a cold spring morning.



Pointer MayBelle getting a shift on through the heather.

A short-eared owl ghosted up from some heather

On a single day we saw a magnificent black cock standing a few yards from the track as we drove onto the hill, then watched a pair of golden plover a few yards from where we parked to start our count. There were

lapwings tumbling about the sky, skylarks singing, several pairs of curlews floating above the heather and a pair of mallard that rose from a little pond where Rose the English setter was pointing a pair of grouse. A pair of geese rose with stately wingbeats from another little splash of water and a

short-eared owl ghosted up from some long heather to the surprise of Flame the Irish setter. When we stopped to eat our lunch first a red kite and then a peregrine falcon drifted above us.

There are few better ways to spend a spring day than out on a grouse moor watching a pointer or a setter quartering the ground and then drawing on to point. The sight of a cock grouse strutting across the ground with his red wattles shining in the sun as he tries to draw the dog away from where his hen is crouching down in the heather is one I will never tire of, nor the way the pair circle round and pitch in so that they can creep back onto

their territory as soon as those intrusive humans and their dogs are on their way. This year has been especially rewarding with the sight of Piper back to doing what he loves. A huge vote of thanks is due to all those who contributed to the fund that made his operation and recovery possible.



A cock grouse leads Irish setter Flame away from the hen bird.



2019 Spring Report for Pointer & Setter Field trials

Joan McGillicuddy's Starjet was the winner of the opening trial of 2019.

As Charles Dickens said, '*Spring is the time of the year, when it is summer in the sun and winter in the shade.*' 2019 heralded a new year and though the previous year's trialling continued into the dying days of November, there is always expectation and a jaded excitement come the first day of February.

The trials in the south of Ireland begin traditionally with the Irish Red & White setter stakes in Wicklow. While the weather forecast was promised poor, club secretary Jim Sheridan, the best meteorologist I know, stuck to his plans. A bright, if rather cold and breezy day greeted us. A large entry arrived wrapped up and prepared for competition. Judges for this event were the aforementioned Jim Sheridan (Craigrua) and Jason Benson (Concomroe).

Conditions did have a huge impact on scent and there were grouse opportunities for almost all braces of dogs. As usual for spring competitions, there were some close calls and unlucky stories, however there were a number of

finds on grouse going into the second round. Joan McGillicuddy's Int FTCh (Snipe Ch) Starjet covered a lot of ground in her first round and was fortunate her beat lead her to the shelter of the forest. A pair of grouse sat obligingly for her to have a nice production a long way out on her right-hand side. Ray Monroe's red & white setter FTCh Rosie Jim dismissed the cold breeze and roded out a long way to a single grouse crossing several gullies on her way. The writer's own Malstabodarna Embla had a nice find on a single grouse.

It was an eventful second round and the judges in the biting cold called the winner as Joan McGillicuddy's Starjet with second place to Ray Monroe's FTCh Rosie Jim and third to Malstabodarna Embla. All dogs were graded excellent.

The circuit moved to the lowlands and the flat plains of Galway to the historical town of Athenry. An almost full entry, and judges were Neil Ryan (of Felim) and Alan Bartley (Ballinahemmy). A really high-quality

stake was enjoyed with many snipe finds and a couple of incidents with wild pheasants. There were 12 finds going into the second round and some outstanding running dogs. An extension to the second round was called with Pat Reape's Lisduvoge Bruno and Billy Grace's FTCh (Snipe Ch) Capparoe Jata. The judges then went into conclave.

The winner was announced as Billy Grace's Jata with second to Joan McGillicuddy's Starjet, and third and fourth to Mayo men Paraig Kiely with pointer Avondale Its Me and Pat Reape with Ballinahemmy Red. The judges identified ground work as the differentiating factor in the results.

Then the weather! For a variety of differing reasons, the following trials were cancelled but weather being the key influencer. The Irish Red Setter club in Kaedeen, Cashel Field Trials Association in the Midlands, Premier field trials from fog in Kinnity, Cill Dara in Wicklow due to snow and the Irish Pointer club due to storm flooding and finally the Gordon setter novice stake in the Midlands.



Michael Houston's Int FTCh Ardclinis Francie Frank working out. Photo R. Monroe.

The next stake to take place was the always well supported English Setter Club's spring stake on 23rd March. Bright and dry, and even warm conditions greeted the enthusiastic competitors. An entry of 36 dogs was on the card but only the maximum of 30 dogs could run. First out of the blocks was Billy Grace's Jata who drew freely to a pair of grouse. Mandy Brennan with her Italian English setter "Chieftain" then produced a grouse

down a hollow in some rushes while completing her groundwork evenly.

Scent again was poor and a deciding factor as some very established dogs failed to locate grouse on their beat much to the disappointment of their owners. The writer's own FTCh Malstabodarna Idun of Ballydavid had a quick find not long off the lead. Her diminutive stature not a benefit to locating her setting in high heather. She finished out her run with no issues.

In the second round, Paddy People's very exciting English setter Tullycroman Cleo who had given a memorable display in round one, produced a snipe under a turf bank. However, unfortunately Cleo was slightly unsteady to flush. Aidan Dunne's FTCh (Snipe Ch) Blackstairs Behenny who had an excellent but birdless run in round one added a find on grouse in the second round. The remaining braces finished out their runs without incident or damage.

Judges Jim Crotty (Brackbawn) and Jason Benson (Concomroe) gave their decision to the expectant gallery. First was Aidan Dunne's Behenny and second to Mandy Brennan's Chieftain and third Malstabodarna Idun and fourth Billy Grace's Jata. All dogs were graded excellent to highlight the end of a very high-quality trial, considering enforced lay off dogs had to endure with all the cancelled trials.

The last trial of the spring circuit was the Wicklow and Wexford Stakes in the Dublin mountains judged by Pat Dooley (Wildfield) and Alan Bartley (Ballinahemmy). With the clocks going forward the night before, thick dense fog greeted us at the meet. Coffee and lunches were obliterated and end of season chats were the order of the morning. The club secretary being more optimistic in nature than the competitors insisted it could clear. Just as the trial was to be cancelled, at 12pm the fog lifted and some competitors changed back into their trialling attire.

Grouse were plentiful, but due to the foggy conditions, scent was very poor. First find in the books was Kieran Walsh's FTCh Blackmoor Cochise who defied scenting conditions and roded out to a single grouse. Neil Ryan's FTCh Bold Jim of Felim also had a find on the extreme left of the beat. The young judge Alan Bartley efficiently made up the ground to ensure everything was done correctly. Both English setters carried their finds into the second rounds and were drawn to run against each other. Paraig Kiely with Ballinahemmy Rose, who had an



The winner in Athenry was Billy Grace with FTCh (Snipe Ch) Capparoo Jata. (Photo R. Monroe).

excellent first round of quartering added a find on a pair of grouse sheltering in a hollow. No further dogs added grouse to their cause so the judges announced the winner as the aforementioned Paraig Kiely with his Irish setter Ballinahemmy Rose. Second was Kieran Walsh's FTCh Blackmoor Cochise and third to Neil Ryan's FTCh Bold Jim of Felim.

The spring circuit in Ulster began on the 23rd February in Slievenarorra with the Northern Irish Pointer club stake. After quite a delay due to heavy fog, the cavalcade moved to a lower section of the ground. A very good quality trial with an abundance of game, some dogs ignored treacherous conditions and FTCh Ballydavid Spitfire had an excellent find on a grouse the mountain top before the trial moved to the lower reaches. FTCh Ballydavid Gaelforce, similarly had a snipe find under some pressure from her brace-mate in one of the first couple of braces. Ger Devine's FTCh Ballyellen Tango had a smart find on a grouse on the resumption of the stake.

The second round, due to weather conditions was limited to 3 ½ brace, where dogs with finds undoubtedly improved themselves with good groundwork. Spitfire added a further two snipe finds in his run. The judges Ray Monroe (Granaghburn) and Desmond Linton called the result as a win for Ger Devine's FTCh Ballyellen Tango with second to Mark Adams' FTCh Ballydavid Spitfire and third to Joan McGillicuddy's FTCh Ballydavid Gaelforce of the Kingdom.

The next scheduled trial again in Slievenaarra was on 2nd March officiated by Michael Houston (Sperrin) and Doug Collins who had travelled from Aberdeen. While the writer, due to officiate the Premier Field trials, sat looking out at billowing fog in the Slieve Blooms which ultimately lead to the cancellation of the stake, the following was the result of the Ulster Gundog Leagues trial. First was Ray Monroe's Irish red and white setter Granaghburn Nebraska and second



Mandy Brennan was second in the English Setter stakes with Chieftain. Photo R. Monroe.

place to Mark Adams' FTCh Ballydavid Spitfire, third to Andy Laws' Shanrycon Diamond and fourth to Davy O'Neill's litter sister Shanrycon Casey. A COM was presented to Mark Adams' FTCh Hunshigo Donard. The next day was the Strabane and District field trials in the keptered moors of Glenwherry, County Antrim. Unsurprisingly, grouse and some hares were plentiful.

Judged by Ger Devine (Gortinreagh) and the aforementioned Doug Collins,

there was plenty of excitement in this trial. Mark Adams's FTCh Hunshigo Donard took a smart find in the first couple of brace. Joan McGillicuddy's Starjet had a long production over a mound to an exuberant and noisy cock grouse. There were further finds and some mistakes but just four brace were called back for another round. Mark Adam's Donard had two smart finds on snipe. Michael Houston's Int FTCh Ardclinis Francie Frank and the writer's



Paraig Kiely with Ballinahemmy Rose winner of Wicklow & Wexford stake.



Ger Devine's FTCh Ballyellen Tango was the winner of the Northern Irish Pointer club stake. Photo R. Monroe.

own FTCh Malstabodarna Idun of Ballydavid had a memorable run with some lovely ground work pace and style. The other braces ran without

incident with some dogs displaying great dash and style. A further brace was called for additional time being Carol Calvert's Ballyellen Blue Grass and

Malstabodarna Idun. Both dogs gave a great account of themselves. The run ended with Idun having a nice long production on a snipe.

The judges signalled trial over and Joan McGillicuddy's Int FTCh Ballydavid Starjet was announced the winner with Mark Adams FTCh Hunshigo Donard in second. Carol Calvert's Ballyellen Blue Grass received a certificate of merit. The Ulster Red Setter club trial scheduled for the following week was cancelled due to snow in Glenwherry ending the Ulster spring circuit.

It was another quite frustrating Spring season. Dogs were getting into their stride at the start of February and were faced with a long lay-off. Normally trials on a weekend would maintain the dogs' fitness however, by the end of March, some of the dogs were definitely looking tired from training, and in need of a good rest. The next trials will begin on 1st August. Enjoy the break!



Mark Adams' FTCh Hunshigo Donard was second in the Strabane & District stake.

Review of Field Trial Events for Pointers & Setters

“In Ireland, there are two seasons, June and Winter” is a variant of the quote from Billy Connolly, and 2018 will be remembered for the arctic snow conditions of our Spring and accordingly most of the field trial events for pointers and setters were cancelled.

We are blessed that our sport takes place in some of the most strikingly scenic places on the island from the wilds of Connemara squeezed against the Atlantic Ocean, to the richness of heather in the Wicklow mountains soaring over Dublin, to Kinnity that seems to have views over all of Ireland. Monaghan with its low rounded hills to the windy Murley mountains in Tyrone and the dramatic Slievenorra, where on a clear day you can see the coast of Scotland. The charge for these locations is “the weather.”

Ulster field trials completed two of their scheduled trial, one in Slievenorra, the other in Moirlough. Slievenorra, in decent conditions, was won by Ray Monroe with his red & white setter Granaghsburn Nebraska with runner up to Joan McGillicuddy’s FTCh Ballydavid Gaelforce with Bill Connolly’s Sheantullagh Jessie in third.

Poignantly as it turned out, Alan Neill was in reserve with Fearn Stanley. Alan Neill was a great character in field trials in Ulster and across the water in England and Scotland. His life ended tragically in a road traffic accident on his way to Scotland for the trialling circuit there. Some of his dogs were also killed and injured. One of the most heartening aspects of this whole tragic incident was the fundraising by his friends and the wider field trialling fraternity. A significant amount through donations was raised for the veterinary care of his dogs. He is greatly missed by all.

In the south, a novice trial in Athenry was held and won by David Bell, his first win. The sport also lost Frank McManus in Ulster who had campaigned both sides of the water and north and south. He was the current chairman of the Northern Ireland Pointer club and started trialling in the early 1960’s. Frank claimed the Open Pointer and Setter Stake on no less than seven occasions with four different dogs. I competed against Frank in my first Irish Championship in 1997 where my Red Monarch was braced against his pointer Int. FTCh Stoney Rig.

Summer yielded the polar opposite

in weather conditions and the bout of extremely dry weather meant that insect life at the time of hatching in May was problematic. While it did effect grouse numbers on the estates in Britain, thankfully it did not seem to negatively impact the production of Irish grouse. Pat Reape had a fantastic summer winning the red setter breed stake with Lisduvoge Lilly and the following days open stake with Lisduvoge Patch. He then won the Irish Championship on grouse for the second year in succession with FTCh Ballinahemmy Mike. Sean Hogan, by winning the Cashel Field trials stake in Kinnity made up his first field trial champion with Irish setter Concomroe Corona.

Meanwhile, with some overlap, the Ulster trials kicked off again in September with the Ulster Red setter club trials in Murley where Bill Connolly’s Sheantullagh Cormac was victorious with Joan McGillicuddy’s Starjet and my own FTCh Malstabodarna Idun in third. Ger Devine’s English setter FTCh Ballyellen Tango won the next two stakes, while Starjet was placed first ahead of her litter brother Spitfire in Strabane. The circuit ended at the



Ray Monroe's Granaghsburn Nebraska



Joan McGillicuddy's FTCh Ballydavid Gaelforce of the Kingdom roding out to grouse

beginning of October with wins for Mark Adams' FTCh Hunshigo Donard ahead of Joan McGillicuddy's Gaelforce in the Northern Ireland Pointer club stakes, Ger Devine's Gortinreagh Big Jake in the Ulster Gundog League and Gaelforce reversing the previous result with Hunshigo Donard in second in Slievenaorra.

Sadly, another loss to the sport was the death of Brendan Coyle, after a long illness fought with fortitude and good humour. Brendan was a stalwart of the trials in Ulster and had campaigned a red setter and a Koram pointer from his brother the legendary pointer man James. On a personal note, Brendan was the definition of a "gentle" man. He was such a great influence on the atmosphere on trials in Ulster with his positive words for everyone. For me, he certainly shortened many a long road home after a disappointment with his kind and thoughtful words. Long may he be remembered.

A new development in 2018 was the snipe festival held in the patchwork of bogs in the Midlands. Some great conservation work on the underrated bogs by Oliver Naughton, Jim McCormack and Vincent Flannelly which comprises in the preservation of the flora and fauna for future

generations. It also happens to preserve the habitat for birds such as plovers, curlews and snipe. This initiative is symbiotic for everyone concerned and will serve as an invaluable educational tool for adults and children. Five days of trialling were scheduled and a large overseas contingent travelled, which was a significant boost for the local economy.

The first trial of the festival was won by J.P. Rivoal with his Gordon setter while another French man, Bruno Fasoli was successful the next day with an Irish setter. Monaghan man Kevin Quinn won the last day of trials with his Irish setter Sheantullagh Bronagh before the two-day championship. The inaugural Irish snipe championship covered comprehensively in the last issue was won by Aidan Dunne's FTCh (Snipe Ch) Blackstairs Behenny with runner up to Strabane's Michael Houston's Int. FTCh Ardclinis Francie Frank and third to Joan McGillicuddy's FTCh Ballydavid Gaelforce with reserve to the aforementioned J.P. Rivoal Halma des Rives de la Penfeld.

It was certainly a memorable year for both the championship winners. Aidan Dunne's Irish setter FTCh (Snipe Ch) Blackstairs Behenny had three open stake wins and crucially the first Irish snipe championship. Pat Reape did the double at the prestigious Irish

red setter stakes on 1st and 2nd August before winning his fourth Irish grouse championship. Monaghan man, Kevin Quinn won the Irish derby and then was victorious at the Native breeds trial in the Midlands.

Kieran Walsh's English setter FTCh Blackmoor Cochise had three wins and a second in the Irish Championship, while Joan McGillicuddy's FTCh Ballydavid Gaelforce of the Kingdom had two wins, five seconds and two thirds and her kennel mate Ballydavid Starjet of the Kingdom had similarly two wins and a number of seconds. Finally, my own FTCh Malstabodarna Idun of Ballydavid had another consistent year with two wins, five seconds and three thirds culminating in her receiving the most championship points and therefore the Irish Kennel Club Dog of the Year title for the second year in succession.

Of the 29 trials held in the Republic, there were 23 different winners. In Ulster, of the ten trials held, where there were awards given, there were different winners each time with the exception of Ger Devine's FTCh Ballyellen Tango who won twice.

After a non-start in the Spring, with the wide distribution of winners and developments to the sport, I think that 2018 was a memorable year for many, and the sport is in rude health.



Aidan Dunne's winner of the first snipe championship FTCh (Snipe Ch) Blackstairs Behenny.



Kieran Walsh's FTCh Blackmoor Cochise was English Setter of the Year 2018

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