

# Irish COUNTRY SPORTS and COUNTRY LIFE



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**Front Cover:**

'Winter Partridge'

From an original oil painting  
by renowned Northern Ireland  
Artist - John R. Moore

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**A**t this time of the year I always look forward to the shooting season and reflect on the year that has passed. Costs, I'm told, have risen sharply resulting in inevitable rises for the amount charged per Gun.

I happened to glance at a copy of a well known UK magazine which carried adverts with eye-wateringly high charges this year at some of the top shoots. A nice little grouse day at £3000 plus vat. Perhaps? Or what about a 500 bird pheasant day for only £3,750 per Gun plus VAT? Another shoot is advertised as offering a 400 bird day at a little over £21,000, but the good news is that there is no VAT on this one. So there you are - a snip!

With this happening are we heading back to the time when only the landed gentry and captains of industry took part in formal driven shooting as was much the case 50 year ago?

At Castle Pringle, the stumps were almost pulled in terms of game shooting at the end of the season last year. A few medical problems had arisen, which saw me in the Cardiac Ward on two occasions, gaining entry through A&E. This certainly curtailed both my opportunities and ability to have a day at a peg, although I did manage one day at the delightful Cherry Valley shoot run by the well known and respected Joe Taylor. Luckily I got some picking up at another excellent shoot, but these were the only times I was out in the field enjoying the sights and sounds of the season last year.

I was resolved at the end of last season and into spring this year that I would retain only one gun and shoot clays. However, the fates decided otherwise and invitations to join two little forestry shoots saw me turn my attention back to what I had enjoyed in my formative years, when a day out meant a shot or two and a very mixed bag of game and minimal costs. The only other consideration is my state of health, so we will see what happens.

However, cost is not the only threat

to shooting – lead shot, including Packham raising the issue of lead in game sold in supermarkets with the potential to damage game sales, other legal threats by Packham to releases, shortening seasons, snares etc all of which put our representative organisations on the 'back foot' to respond. It would also seem that much publicity is easily acquired by the antis. An increasingly woke society adds to the matter and so often when it comes to the positive aspects of shooting including conservation, income derived through the presence of a shoot, employment and so much more seem to fall on deaf ears in the media.

But well done to our organisations for their continuing efforts. Every hunter, shooter and angler should support you by becoming members!

Thinking back to some of my most memorable shooting outings with spaniel, I remember that many were to Strangford Lough and a wee parcel of ground near Downpatrick, with my lifelong shooting buddy. Someone would ask after our Saturday forays, 'well how did Saturday go, any luck?' And our reply as we beamed with happiness reliving our latest foray, 'Absolutely great thanks - super day!' The dog had gone well, we are in the field and we might even have had a shot. Did we get anything? Well, not often. But that didn't really matter. Now it seems that my shooting career has turned back to those golden days, when a pigeon or two were great and a wee woodcock something to think of at the fire while planning how it might best be served for dinner.

Meanwhile, we turn to the environment, shooting and angling interests in our magazine and note with horror the impact by the algal bloom on Lough Neagh. It's good to see many country sports people involved in community groups committed to address the problem and good to see several thousand people turn out to a march in Belfast. In this magazine,

Michael Martin and Noel Carr cover some facets of the problem in their articles.

Better news comes from John Toal, Diarmuid O'Crowley and the NARGC on the conservation work carried out by shooting clubs and syndicates in the close season, especially relating to grey partridge.

As in every year since 1985, Irish Country Sports and Country Life has continued to sponsor and report on all of the sports through a network of highly professional and knowledgeable contributors including gundog and terrier & lurcher results – in this issue Hugh Brady gives comprehensive coverage of pointers and setters and Margaret McStay Terriers & lurchers.

We take Irish hunting, shooting & fishing news to a huge international audience through our extensive social media reach of over 30k, our top quality hard copy glossy magazine and our FREE to READ online edition of the magazine with 3.5-5K regular readers per week at [www.countrysportsandcountrylife.com](http://www.countrysportsandcountrylife.com).

Since 1979, we have been responsible for organising 69 Irish Game fairs and we had hoped to report on plans for a 2024 Game Fair but discussions are still ongoing. Keep up to date on this and other sporting issues on our Irish Hunting, Shooting & Fishing Facebook group; 'countrysports' X (formerly Twitter) account; 'irishgamefairs' X (twitter) account and Great Game Fairs of Ireland Facebook group and page.

I am getting reports that the birds have done well this year by and large. Some estates got their birds later than normal and have seen less wandering occurring. Mechanical feeding with supplementary feeds where necessary is the name of the game. So whatever the next season and indeed the next year may have in store for you, may your aim be true.

**Paul Pringle**  
Editor



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# Barbour Celebrates an Evergreen Icon: 40 years of the Beaufort Jacket

Leading heritage and lifestyle brand, Barbour is celebrating the 40th anniversary of its iconic Beaufort jacket. Designed by Dame Margaret Barbour and launched in 1983, the Beaufort has become one of Barbour's most recognised styles and is forever synonymous with the British countryside. Made in Barbour's factory in South Shields in the North East of England, this practical, fit for purpose, global icon continues to be worn across the generations.



Charlie Casely-Hayford wears Barbour Beaufort Wax Jacket RRP £289.00 Available at [Barbour.com](https://barbour.com)

To celebrate this landmark, Barbour has produced a 40th anniversary limited edition of the Beaufort. Made in South Shields and with all the features of the original jacket, it has a covetable back neck label marking the 40th anniversary and studs engraved with Beaufort 40. Available in the original colours of sage, navy and olive. The Beaufort 40th anniversary campaign is part of an overarching Evergreen Icons campaign which celebrates the enduring and long-lasting style of Barbour's classic wax jackets.

The Beaufort, Bedale, Border, Ashby and Beadnell jackets are purposeful, practical and timeless. Through Barbour's Wax for Life initiative, the life of these jackets can be further extended through re-waxing and repairing them and when their owners no longer have a need for them, they can be 're-loved' in Barbour's South Shields factory, ready to go to a new home supporting Barbour's ongoing commitment to circularity and sustainability.



Clare Richardson wears Barbour Bedale Wax Jacket RRP £269.00 Available at [Barbour.com](https://barbour.com)

To celebrate the Evergreen Icons campaign, Barbour has partnered with four friends of the brand, Charlie Casely-Hayford (fashion designer) Clare Richardson (stylist and founder of Re-Luxe Fashion), Fei Wang (Mr Slow Boy, fashion illustrator) and Zinnia Kumar (ecologist and model) who all have a personal relationship with the Beaufort with an understanding of its timeless style, generational power and circularity credentials.

Discover more at [barbour.com/evergreen-icons](https://barbour.com/evergreen-icons)



Evergreen Icon Barbour Ashby Wax Jacket RRP £229.00 Available at [Barbour.com](https://barbour.com)







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The EL Range 10x42 shows precise details when viewing over long distances thanks to its 10x magnification, and the EL Range 8x42 is ideal for numerous viewing opportunities right up to twilight. Their expansive field of view and large exit pupil ensure optimum comfort during observation.

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The binoculars combine state-of-the-art optics with precise measuring functions.

The integrated tilt indicator with a unique angle shot program displays either the adjusted shooting distance or the angle. The EL RANGE gives you precise measurements from a distance of 10 meters (10.9 yards).

### **PERSONALIZED BALLISTICS AIM**

Use the smartphone app to configure the binoculars to your specific needs and individual ballistics data. Based on this and atmospheric data such as air pressure and temperature, it helps you to shoot with even greater precision because, along with the adjusted shooting distance, it also gives you the number of clicks needed for your rifle scope.

### **TRACKING ASSISTANT FIND**

The integrated Tracking Assistant makes it much easier to track your prey by guiding you to where you fired your last shot. You can opt to use this program via your phone or your EL Range.

The EL Range is available from selected authorised dealers or online at [www.swarovskioptik.com](http://www.swarovskioptik.com)

RRP from £3130.00, now comes in green and orange armouring, supplied with a functional side bag, strap, lens covers, rainguard, BT tool and soap & brush kit.

EL Range ([swarovskioptik.com](http://swarovskioptik.com))





# Country Sports Ireland

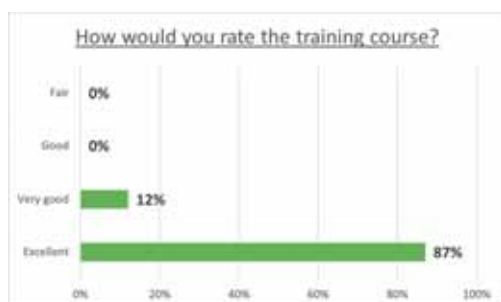
## Training Course Survey 2023

Country Sports Ireland contributes to maintenance of high standards of competency within shooting sports through the delivery of training that meets the highest professional standards and is enjoyable and educational for learners of all abilities and experience. Feedback from learners who attend any Country Sports Ireland training event is extremely valuable as it helps us to continually reflect upon and improve many aspects of training and assessment.

During 2023 we carried out an extremely comprehensive survey of learners who attended certain Country Sports Ireland training courses. Learners were invited to comment on their training and assessment experience via a series of questions contained in an anonymous online survey. The aim of survey was to gain feedback from learners in respect of 3 specific courses listed as below.

- Deer Stalking Training Course
- Trained Hunter Large Wild Game (Deer) meat hygiene course
- NI Deer Stalking Training Course

A total of 206 responded to the survey, which we believe makes it a highly representative sample. In addition to receiving some helpful suggestions, we have been truly humbled and amazed by the overall responses from learners. For example, learners were asked to rate their overall training course experience and a whopping 87% rated their experience as 'excellent'. A further 12% of learners described their overall experience as 'very good'. Therefore, in total 99% of all respondents selected either the 'excellent' or 'very good' option when answering this question (see graph below).



Responses to one of the questions on the 2023 Training Course Survey

Country Sports Ireland is very grateful to all learners who attended any of our training courses during 2023 and in particular, those learners who responded to the Training Course Survey 2023. We would also like to put on record our thanks to our fantastic team of instructors, contributors, volunteers, and host venues who work together to create optimum conditions for learning and embrace the opportunities for improvement and development.

## Open Seasons Order

Readers of ICS&CL will by now be aware that a new Open Seasons Order came into effect on 1st September 2023. It has been published on the National Parks & Wildlife Service website and can be viewed via the link: <https://www.npws.ie/legislation/irish-law/open-seasons-order>

The Open Seasons Order sets out the species that may be hunted (including most wild bird species), and dates between which hunting of these species may take place.

This year a unilateral decision was made by Green Party Minister, Malcolm Noonan TD to amend the Open Seasons Order to remove Scaup, Pochard, Goldeneye and Pintail meaning they can no longer be hunted.

Country Sports Ireland believes that the Minister acted prematurely and in bad faith by arbitrarily introducing changes to the Open Seasons Order without any consultation whatsoever



with key stakeholders. The fact Dail Eireann was in recess and therefore unable to scrutinise the new Open Seasons Order, casts further doubt on the impartiality and integrity of the Minister's actions. Furthermore, a clear scientific rationale for this arbitrary action has never been provided, which raises further concerns about the actual decision-making process.

Country Sports Ireland will continue to work with other country sports representative organisations to ensure that all government decisions that affect shooting sports are based on scientific evidence and with full, open, and honest stakeholder engagement. We will actively challenge any decisions that do not meet these basic standards.

## Regulations on Lead Shot come into effect

An EU Regulation restricting the use, or carrying of lead shot on wetlands, or within 100 metres of wetlands came in effect in February 2023. This Regulation is binding in its entirety and directly applicable in all EU Member States, although its impact will be more pronounced in Ireland because there were previously no restrictions on lead shot.

Following this, Country Sports Ireland called for details of locations where restrictions would apply to be published, so that hunters could become familiar with these in their own locality. On 23rd August 2023, National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) published an online map containing all the wetland habitats which are subject to the new Regulation and can be viewed via the link: <https://www.npws.ie/legislation/eu-regulation-restrictions-use-lead-gunshot-or-around-wetlands>

The sites included on this map are Ireland's Ramsar sites and Natural Heritage Areas, all Special Protection Areas, and Special Areas of Conservation with qualifying interests related to wetlands. We encourage members to become familiar with these areas.

## Blue-green Algae

With the duck hunting season now well underway, we continue to receive regular enquiries from members regarding any



toxins produced by blue-green algae can be harmful to humans and are known to be highly toxic to animals. The presence of blue-green algae has been confirmed in multiple locations in Lough Neagh, Lower Bann and Lower Lough Erne. We have therefore produced the advice below, in consultation with the relevant statutory authorities to assist members with minimising the health risk when hunting in these areas.



### to minimise the health risk of blue-green algae:

- Avoid hunting in areas where there is an obvious algal bloom.
- Avoid wading and unnecessary contact with water.
- Blue-green algae is highly toxic to dogs. Avoid retrieving in areas of obvious algal bloom, wash dogs after hunting and keep an eye on their condition. If symptoms such as vomiting, diarrhoea, drooling, or general unwellness are observed consult a vet ASAP.
- In the absence of definitive research, consuming wildfowl from waters affected by a blue-green algae bloom is an unknown health risk.
- General advice, as a precautionary approach, is to avoid eating birds located from affected waters, especially the viscera of birds but specifically not consuming dead or dying/unhealthy birds.
- Cyanotoxins are resilient to boiling and high temperatures, making traditional cooking and food processing methods ineffective or inadequate for killing/removing toxins.

### further information:

Country Sports Ireland [www.countrysportsireland.org](http://www.countrysportsireland.org)  
 Environment Agency <https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/blue-green-algae>  
 Public Health Agency <https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/blue-green-algae>

### Blue-Green Algae Information Sheet

potential risks associated with hunting in areas affected by blue-green algae.

Blue-green algal blooms have been recorded at multiple locations this year. Impacts have particularly significant in Lough Neagh and the Lower Bann, but other sites have also been impacted including Lower Lough Erne.

In addition to the human and animal health risks, which by this stage are relatively well known, we are receiving regular requests for information regarding any food safety risks associated with the consumption of waterfowl harvested in wetlands affected by blue-green algae.

Country Sports Ireland has been liaising with the Food Standards Agency on this issue and they have advised us that, in the absence of definitive research, data and regulatory limits in EU law for cyanotoxins in wildfowl, consuming wildfowl from waters affected by a blue-green algae bloom is an unknown health risk.

The blue-green algae can produce a family of toxins known as microcystins (cyanotoxins); these toxins can cause liver damage. The advice, as a precautionary approach, is to avoid eating birds harvested in affected waters, especially the viscera of birds but specifically not consuming dead or dying/unhealthy birds. Cyanotoxins are resilient to boiling and high temperatures, making traditional cooking and food processing methods ineffective or inadequate for removing toxins.

We have therefore produced an information sheet to help members manage these risks. To request a copy please email: [info@countrysportsireland.org](mailto:info@countrysportsireland.org)

## Focus on Firearms

Country Sports Ireland is working with Ireland's other leading shooting and countryside organisations to achieve fairer firearms laws and more efficient and consistent firearms licencing processes.

For example, we were part of a delegation from the Firearms Users Representative Group (FURG) that met with Minister of State at the Dept of Justice, James Browne TD, and his officials to challenge many of the unnecessary and unreasonable proposals contained in the reports of Firearms Expert Committee. At this meeting we also took the opportunity to present information to support our own recommendations for firearms licencing reform which we had previously submitted to the Department via a very substantial joint written submission. On the same day we met with

the Minister of State at the Dept of Justice, James Browne TD we also travelled to Dail Eireann to brief Claire Kirrane TD, Sinn Fein spokesperson on Rural Development to build support for our collective position on these issues.

We are also beginning to see signs of progress following successful joint action initiatives delivered by Northern Ireland Firearms Representative Group (NIFRG). This work includes regular liaison with senior members of PSNI, politicians and oversight bodies such as the NI Policing Board. The success of these joint action initiatives is clear evidence that there is indeed strength in numbers.

## Deer Management Strategy Group

The Deer Management Strategy Group was convened last year to address growing concerns about the impact of increased deer numbers on a variety of issues such as farming, forestry, biodiversity, road safety, animal health and welfare and the welfare of the deer themselves.

An extensive public consultation exercise was carried out earlier this year providing interested individuals, groups, or organisations with the opportunity to have their say on the above issues. There was a substantial response to this consultation with many farming and forestry representatives calling for action to radically reduce deer populations both nationally and in several 'hot spot' areas, in particular.

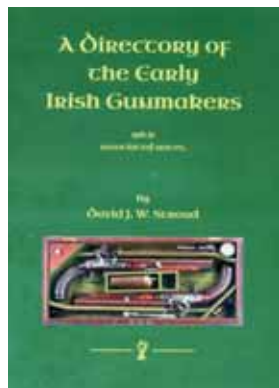
Following the public consultation, five sub-committees were established in the summer of 2023, each with a mandate to make recommendations that would help achieve sustainable deer densities throughout the country. Country Sports Ireland was represented on two of these sub-committees with our objective being to ensure that the role of recreational hunters was fully appreciated and that they are centrally involved in the delivery of any actions emerging from the work of the Deer Management Strategy Group.

Final recommendations of the Deer Management Strategy Group will be submitted to government later this year. Subject to ministerial approval and of course funding initial actions are likely to include the creation of a single agency within government with responsibility for deer management, a more focussed approach to deer management in problem areas and changes to the season for deer hunting. There are also like to be many longer-term objectives identified with the Deer Management Strategy Group report.



*Pictured following a briefing in the Dáil (L-R) Dan Curley (NARGC), Liam Nolan (Deer Alliance), Claire Kirrane TD, Ronan Gorman (Country Sports Ireland) and Damian Hannigan (Irish Deer Commission)*





## NEW PUBLICATION

### A Directory of the Early Irish Gunmakers

by David J.W. Stroud

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# Countryside Alliance



## Have you nominated yet?

It's now down to you the general public to nominate your favourite rural businesses and put them forward to be considered for a prestigious Countryside Alliance Award. Categories include; village shop, butcher, pub, rural enterprise and local food and are run across the whole of the UK. The applicants are judged on a range of criteria including their passion and commitment, sense of community, championing local food and the energy and diversity of their business.

Being nominated for the Countryside Alliance Awards can have a real impact on rural businesses. Most importantly, those businesses that go on to become finalists or champions will receive regional and national recognition, strengthening the reputation of their brand.

Nominating in the Countryside Alliance Awards is a chance to celebrate our rural businesses' huge impact on communities and help them build for even more success in the future.

To nominate please go to [www.countryside-alliance.org/caawards](http://www.countryside-alliance.org/caawards)



## Hunting and the Unintended Consequences of Bad Law.

Rural Wrongs is an insightful look at the real consequences the ban on hunting has had on the fox and other quarry species.

As part of research over the past two years, environmental journalist Charlie Pye-Smith and animal welfare campaigner Jim Barrington have travelled to all parts of the UK and Ireland, meeting a wide range of people – farmers, gamekeepers, scientists, hunters, shooters and conservationists – who work at the sharp end of wildlife and countryside management.

Their research reveals exactly how the 2004 Hunting Act and its equivalent in Scotland have affected the welfare of the wild animals involved. Instead of making life better for the fox, brown hare and deer, they have made life worse. This is the conclusion of the first major research project to look at the impact of the hunting bans. Due to be launched in October 2023 these findings will be a revelation to anyone interested in the long-running debate surrounding hunting with hounds.

This investigation gives MLAs the unique opportunity to make a decision on hunting with hounds based on evidence – something the rest of the UK did not have. With another Bill likely they would be amazingly foolish to ignore these results before making another bad law like the mistakes made in the 2011 Welfare of Animals (Northern Ireland) Act.

CAI would also like to take the opportunity to thank all those who assisted Jim and Charlie.



## Failure to declare

CAI would remind members that every time you fill in a firearms application you are duty bound to declare if you have any convictions no matter how long ago it may have been. Further you disclose any current medical or other medical conditions in the last 5 years when asked, even if you have previously declared them. If you are unsure on any of your current or previous medical conditions, please contact your doctor to discuss before completing your application.

Failure to do so could result in firearms being seized and your case being escalated to a Senior Licensing Firearms Manager to determine if you are fit to continue to hold a FAC. This cannot only be a lengthy process but also a drain on PSNI and FEB resources that could be better used.

In a recent case, after seizing and waiting on third party information, some 5 months later FEB state the member would not have been prevented from holding an FAC. However, the letter goes on to say as they failed to declare, such an untruth is in itself a criminal offence under Article 73 of the Firearms (NI) Order 2004. It reflects a standard of behaviour not expected of a FAC holder and casts doubt on their suitability to possess firearms.

## National Trust Council Elections

Members of the National Trust have been invited to elect up to





five candidates for the Council ahead of the AGM. The main responsibilities of the council are to appoint the Trust's Chair, Deputy Chair and members of the Board of Trustees (the NT's governing body) and to hold them to account. Voting for candidates closes at 11:59pm on Friday, 3rd November.

The Trust has recommended five candidates and whilst they are undoubtedly all worthy individuals, we remain concerned that the Trust's Council is not fully representative of those whose lives the organisation can affect the most. In particular, there are very

few Council members with direct experience of farming, rural business or sustaining rural communities.

On the basis of the information we have about the candidates standing for election, we suggest that you consider voting for the following five candidates:

Philip Gibbs  
Violet Manners  
Jim McRobert  
Michael Salter-Church  
Philip Merricks

## Launch of PAW NI Fish Poaching Leaflet

There are a number of illegal activities that can have a detrimental effect on fish stocks, and partner organisations want to help the public identify these activities through the launch of a new leaflet.

Following a meeting with The Partnership for Action Against Wildlife Crime (PAW) Fin (fish poaching), the group is pleased to launch a new leaflet to provide information on fish poaching, what to look out for and who to contact if something appears to be suspicious to any member of the public.

CAI are delighted to continue play an active role in this partnership against wildlife crime. Illegal activities can have an adverse impact on our fish stock. Simply put such activities will not be tolerated.

We very much support the launch of the PAW NI Fishing Leaflet and fully support our partners on the work they do. The aforementioned leaflet can be found at: [www.wildlifecrime.org](http://www.wildlifecrime.org).



Back L-R Melvin Percy (Pike Anglers Club NI), Bill Hall (Pike Anglers Club NI), Seamus Cullinan (Loughs Agency), Gary McCartney (Countryside Alliance Ireland). Front L-R (Abbie Kilgore (Marine team NIEA), Emma Meredith (Police Service Northern Ireland), Art Niven (DAERA).

# Obituary

## Dan 'DC' Kinney



*The late Dan Kinney.*

**D**readfully sorry to hear of the passing of Dan 'DC' Kinney a truly great Irish country man, Dan was an accomplished newspaperman having worked at the Guardian before finishing up as Dep. Editor of the Belfast Newsletter in its 'heyday'. However it was for his much read Saturday 'Rod & Gun' column in the Farming edition of the Newsletter, that he was famous amongst the sporting community. He also wrote columns for Irish Hunting, Shooting & Fishing and the Irish Country Sports and Country Life magazines.

However the obituary published in the Newsletter indicates that Dan was also held in very high regard by his fellow journalists being described as an 'exceptional newsman'.

<https://www.newsletter.co.uk/news/national/obituary-former-news-letter-journalist-dan-kinney-was-exceptional-newsman-who-didnt-suffer-fools-gladly-4200296>

Dan was very much a conservationist and worked tirelessly in his beloved Glens of Antrim to build a sustainable grouse population. This was a lifetime commitment and labour of love for him.

Every year for several years, I had the pleasure of Dan's company and craic when he hosted a group of us to shoot grouse on his moors on the Antrim Plateau, His

moors were his passion and the grouse stocks a well kept secret but every year on the 12th August we were privileged to shoot 'ten and a half brace' with Dan, his setter Harry and often with his son 'young Dan'. At times we could have seen up to 40 or 50 brace but one had to work hard for them. Dan preferred only two birds to be shot from a covey – he reckoned this was likely to be the first bird up and the last. The first being the old cock which would ultimately push other cocks out of its area and the weakest bird which was the least likely to survive.

Dan & young Dan were mighty walkers

and although I, at that stage, was also fit from hill walking I found it hard and many in our party suffered for their shots. Dan and I later had a grey partridge shoot also in the glens.

A strong supporter of all country activities including terrier work and vermin control his influence on creating a strong pro country sports ethos in the Newsletter was very important for the development of our sports. And when my home and myself were being attacked by animal rights thugs and unfortunately the PSNI were not doing anything, Dan gave front page coverage to their activities



*Dan leading a party on the moor on the 12th August*



which certainly helped when I took legal action and got a judgement which made them amenable under the anti terrorism legislation.

On a more personal note, I was also indebted to him when I had employment problems with QUB, Dan's support in the columns of the Newsletter, together with support from other friends in the press, helped deliver a very satisfactory settlement for me.

When we produced the Irish Country Sports – A HERITAGE book, I sent him a copy and we had a great conversation reminiscing on past days on the moor.

He has left a great legacy for country sports through his son Dan, who was a powerful and very articulate advocate against the recent anti hunting bill. And I thought it appropriate to ask Dan to share his memories of his Dad.

### **Daniel Colmcille Kinney - my father**

Just a few of my memories. I can remember as a child pestering Dad to go hunting and used to wait at the window for his return and sat wide eyed as he would recount the day's events. Dad came from a farming background and it was the visits of Frank Healy that sparked his interest in Field Sports. I guess it was a form of entertainment at a time when the day was filled with farm chores. Frank became North Antrim fox control officer and Dad accompanied him on his days off. He had utmost respect for Frank and his great relationship with local farmers.

Frank let Dad use his famous 'Midge' to cover a Russell bitch dad got off local gamekeeper Willie Reynolds and so a line of good working terriers was born.

I remember my 1st expedition with Dad. A predatory fox had been seen by a local farmer and a call was made to Dad. We went to Sharky's Rocks and the terrier was soon in business. I can still see that fox explode from rocks in a snowy background and crumple as shot rang out. That was beginning of a love for hunting for me!

On Dad's farm they had some heather and during WW1 he said cartridges were hard to find but grouse were plentiful. He



*A young Dan with a couple of lamb killers. A keen and pragmatic conservationist, Dan believed in maintaining a balance between predator and prey.*

loved those days but in later life largely restrained from shooting dedicated himself, with huge success, to restoring grouse in North Antrim.

He had a great gift with all types of dogs-collies, terriers, pointers/setters and later hounds.

All of the areas The Glens Of Antrim Foxhounds hunt today were the same places Dad and Frank hunted 80 plus years previously.

It wasn't always plain sailing and Dad was not a man to suffer fools. I remember when Hounds had run a lamb killer to ground a would be terrier man begged Dad for chance to work his dog. On his performance Dad said "he was bouncing round the burrow like a rutting stag"!



*A young Dan with some grouse for the pot - in later years his efforts were more focused on building a sustainable grouse population.*

On another occasion Dad appeared to have been out manoeuvred by a former forestry service worker (R.I.P). I said: "Guess he's just too smart for you, to which he drily replied, "He's not smart, he's only cunning!"

I miss him every day and especially on Hunt days, and when I'm on the top of some hill watching hounds I still seek his advice."

**Dan Kinney Jr**

I was delighted to see that Dan's country sports legacy has continued with his son Dan Jnr and grandson Conor photographed here showing hounds at the Game Fair in 2022.

RIP old friend.

**Albert Titterington**



*Dan and Conor Kinney at the Game Fair'22*

From Keith Foran PRO with Larry Bolger Carlow RGC and Grey Partridge Project

## *The Reintroduction of The Irish Grey Partridge*

### An NARGC success story that is going from strength to strength



**The Native Grey Partridge has seen a massive decline due to changes in agricultural practices and is now locally extinct in many areas of the Country. A native game bird it thrived and was once common in the old field systems that are now slowly disappearing, as small- arable farms have become increasingly uncompetitive and in now 2023 nearly obsolete.**

By the early 1990s, the Grey Partridge's inability to adapt to modern farming habitats and techniques, combined with its vulnerability to predators, resulted in its localised extinction in almost all areas except for a few. It was during this period that the National Association of Regional Game Councils (NARGC) conducted a series of national surveys to locate the remaining native populations. Two populations were discovered, one of which was in an area with cutaway bogland in Boora, Co. Offaly.

The NARGC were a founding stakeholder in the Boora partridge project along with the NPWS and The Irish Grey Partridge Conservation Trust. Through our extensive parish level membership base we have continued to roll out our projects across the country. At the National AGM in 2017, Carlow Regional Game put forward a motion for significant additional funding for the grey partridge project such was the importance of this iconic bird, it was unanimously supported from the floor.

In 2017 there were 8 clubs nationwide involved with the project. Now in 2023 we have 24 clubs involved with the projects going from strength to strength while all manned by Local Club Volunteers. Our projects are an example of Hunter led Conservation and we are extremely proud of the work put into

them by the local Clubs and the effort to conserve this iconic bird.

The NARGC's primary (feeder) Grey Partridge Conservation Project is run by Derek O'Brien in North County Dublin. Derek is responsible for breeding the birds and providing coveys of birds to support smaller conservation initiatives amongst the Regional Game Councils. The work of the project is key to the success of other satellite projects, it is here that the eggs are hatched and the coveys of Grey partridge are brought on.

Until late 2022, this was the only NARGC site rearing the Grey Partridge, an iconic and extremely rare native bird. In late 2022, due to increasing club involvement and a fear that disease or a predator attack, the Association decided to establish a second primary project. This project is managed by the Carlow Regional Game Council and NARGC Bagenalstown, with Larry Bolger taking charge of its implementation.

From the experience gained in North County Dublin and again in Carlow three essential factors were identified for a successful project and successful reintroduction of Native Grey Partridge into the wild: Firstly creating suitable habitats that mimic the Grey Partridge's natural environment is crucial for their successful reintroduction. The Grey Partridge's preferred habitat consists of low-intensity arable crops and rough field margins, Farming has experienced significant transformations in recent times, with modern shifts in agricultural practices not suiting the partridge and other ground nesting birds, so finding sympathetic farmers were key who would work with our project leads and members.

Grey Partridge are partial to the verge vegetation within arable



*An excellent pen layout with all the work done by club volunteers*





*A pen with some young partridge just installed*

farmland as their nesting sites, and the primary diet of their young chicks consists of insects. Ideally, a 12-foot area along the hedgerow and strips of cover in the middle of the field would be considered perfect. The game cover crops provided by NARGC is well-suited for the Carlow region where the partridge would be reintroduced and from the first sowing it was a great success for birds and pollinators alike.

Also supplemental feeding involves offering additional food to birds mainly wheat. This is particularly important during crucial periods such as the breeding season and harsh winter months. This practice is aimed at enhancing their chances of survival and overall well-being and condition of the birds. The Carlow project utilises barrel feeders and these are in all the fields that the birds are released in. These barrels are full of wheat with the Carlow project having over 50 feeders out to date.

Finally, vermin/predator control is vital when you are trying to reintroduce and conserve a threatened species on the verge of extinction, then robust predator and vermin management are vital components of Grey in the toolkit for Hunter Led Conservation. The very fact these birds nest on the ground makes them especially prone to predation by Foxes, crows and magpie. The project makes good use of the derogations under the Birds Directive to robustly control the numbers of avian predators and are very active in controlling mammalian predators in the area.

In conclusion, the future of the Native Grey Partridge is looking good and we are very optimistic due mainly to the hard work of our Clubs and the cooperation between likeminded groups coming together for the betterment of a species. If any RGC or affiliated Club wishes to become involved, then it is important that they have not only the correct habitat available but have the time and commitment to spend a lot of time on this iconic bird. We are delighted that the projects are such a success and that more clubs and counties are getting involved. We have welcomed new projects from as far away as Cork to Tipperary and Donegal, it is a clear example where Hunter Led Conservation is successful and were delighted last year when our projects were recognised by FACE in their Biodiversity Manifesto, here is hoping that 2024 will be another successful year.



*A female partridge and her brood*



# Time and conservation effort put in by field sports people



*Rathescar Reserve in all its glory*

**H**ello Readers, I wrote last time on the effort by my local gun club to address the pheasant shortage brought about by the outbreaks of bird flu on the continent, in the UK and in Ireland. This got me to thinking then of the work, time, effort and financial commitment undertaken by my neighbouring clubs and the wider hunting community.

I am fortunate to hold the position of Chairman of Louth Regional Game Council and this brings me into contact with club representatives from across the county. I must mention here that I am ably assisted by a superb executive with in my view the best county secretary in the country, my friend and colleague Jack Matthews. Jack interacts with fellow secretaries, researches topics of concern and lobbies politicians and persons in authority who have influence on or who affect our sporting activities. More on this later as I discuss

the current travails on licensing, the open seasons order and the derogations that allow us to control pest species and offer crop protection to our farming friends.

For now though, I will expand on the story of Dundalk and District GPA. This is one of the oldest established gun clubs in Ireland having been founded in 1949. At one time the preserves stretched from the Cooley mountains in the north to beyond the Fane river to the south of Dundalk. The growth of parish gun clubs, notably Cooley G.C., Jenkinstown G.C. Roach G.C., Knockbridge G.C. and Darver/Drominskin G.C has reduced the preserves but with a membership of seventy five, including six Juniors under the age of fourteen, the club continues to surge forwards.

At present we have over thirty clubs in Louth, including two clay target clubs, all of which are affiliated to



**By John Toal**

Louth R.G.C. and subsequently to the National Association. All of our nine hundred plus members are members of the NARGC compensation fund and each carries personal accident cover. This Membership of the Fund fully indemnifies the land owner, farmer and state bodies like the ESB, Coilte or other Government agencies. This protection given to landowners is key to acquiring permissions to preserve lands by clubs.





*The author (centre) taking part in environmental training*

### **Club focus on conservation, game protection and restoration**

Back to Dundalk and District then. I joined the club in 1978 along with my then shooting partner Hugh Clarke. Forty five years on we are both still members and still take the occasional ramble after game. Down the years I have seen many changes. The destruction of habitat and the loss of biodiversity is saddening but nowadays we are more aware and our focus as a club is firmly on conservation, game protection and where possible restoration.

This focus is not confined to this club with many initiatives in neighbouring clubs. Patsy Kirk and Raymond Quigley of Carrickalust club are overseeing the creation of a duck pond with the full support of the farmer. This preservation and enhancement of scrub land is typical of the work being done across the country by biodiverse aware gun clubs.



*Dundalk G.C. Chairman Michael Rochford, presenting a cheque to a local charity at the annual game meat feast*

In Termonfeckin, John Wilkinson has created a haven for wildlife at his Cross-Gardens home. Darver/Drominiskin have built rearing pens on marginal land with the farmer preserving the adjacent boggy land for the benefit of wildlife. More recently work by this club has been the release

of mallard ducks on a pond by junior members. Great to see the next generation of country sports people in action.

Virtually every club has a project focused on protection of habitat and species. With in excess of nine hundred clubs there is much positive work being



*Reg Tester, County Safety Officer presenting Fintan Duffy of Jenkingstown G.C. with vermin control prize. Also pictured, Peter Callaghan (County Fund Officer).and Pat McEvoy (Louth RGC Vice chairman*

done to protect and preserve our natural environment.

In Louth the showpiece project has to be the Rathescar Reserve near the town of Dunleer. This comprises more than thirty acres of mixed woodland and lake. All that now remains of a forest and hunting lodge established in the late eighteenth century, this plot was purchased by the NARGC from the land commission and latterly leased to Louth RGC to operate as a protected game reserve.

The brain child of Eugene McEntegart, a former chairman of the Game Council and the driving force in the early development of the reserve this initiative has preserved the habitat for wildlife for generations to come. Peter Callaghan and his team (Dermot, Colin and Bernard) care for the reserve these days and the abundance of wildfowl and all manner of bird life is testament to the success of their efforts. The support of the local residents and wider Philipstown and Dunleer community contributes greatly to the success of this venture.

A little personal aside here: some seven years ago I picked up an acorn in Rathescar, took it home and planted it in a window sill pot. A couple of years ago it went outside to a garden tub. Last week Anne Lennon of the friends of Ardee Bog transplanted it to her wilderness patch near Ardee. This oak could live a thousand years. A tree under who's shade I will never sit, but

my small contribution to posterity.

### **Gun Clubs and the community**

So what do gun clubs contribute to the community? Well for starters there is the financial contribution to local business. Taking Dundalk and District as an example the club has spent sixteen thousand euro locally on the game development project. New rearing, holding and release pens were built with the materials all sourced locally, Incubators, brooders, and all associated feeding and watering equipment being just part of the package. Feed bills soared during the pandemic and fuel bills went through the roof. hunters also purchase Firearms, ammunition, field clothing not forgetting the licence fees to Government and all the associated VAT on the purchases. Gun clubs support the farming community protecting crops and are the extra eyes of the farming community reporting damage or injury to livestock.

The soft contribution in the way all species benefit from our game breeding programmes and our supplementary feeding of game during hard weather periods should not be overlooked. There is substantial evidence that songbirds and small mammals thrive in areas preserved by shooters. Gun clubs benefit from enthusiastic membership.

Our current chairman Mick Rochford is a typically energetic young man who has pressed on with the agenda. Some

core members shine, Paul and Stephen Gilliland, Jake and Petet Byrne, Vincent O'Connell and Pat Halpenny (who collected pheasant eggs twice a day from the breeding pens) Alan Bird and Paddy Mac (Club carpenters). The Malone brothers and Gavin McGauley who along with the Chairman shouldered much of the load in the hatching of eggs, Michael Treanor ( the club secretary) who didn't miss a single work detail and the many others too numerous to mention who did their share when called upon,

### **Confidence in the Club's future**

Forty five years on and now in semi-retirement from club work I am confident in the clubs future.

I mentioned the travails affecting shooters earlier in this article and would like to return to them now. Most shooters will be aware of the junior justice minister Mr. James Browne and his advisory group. I will not comment at length on this fiasco other than to say that the agenda that this group was to consider was designed to bring out the desired report and it did not disappoint. The construct was unbalanced with no representation from the major user groups. The reports and recommendations when they arrived read like a Garda wish list. The junior minister pleaded that the reports were only recommendations and that there would be much consultation before any changes were made.

Consultation so wide and involving all and any pressure groups with no verification on the sources of inputs that user groups will be swamped in the data. FURG (Firearms User Representative Group) was formed to counter/ resist proposed new restrictions. Looking at the newly issued FAC1( application /renewal) form it would appear that An Garda have moved unilaterally on aspects of licencing. Similarly legislation went through the Dail to ban self-loading full bore rifles. This now signed into law by the President. Many shooters are



doubting the claws and teeth of FURG and who could blame them. All of this bodes badly for shooters.

Next we come to the late extension of the derogation orders to December 23rd this year. Curiously the reference to Pigeons was from August 22 to December 2023. Has the pigeon been given a closed season (as proposed by Birdwatch Ireland) through the back door? We had to force the former minister Joseph Madigan to roll back on that very proposal a couple of years ago! We are told that the current Minister, Mr. Noonan, is taking advice on this. Who will advise him? Does anyone want to bet on no reduction in the time and number of species that can be controlled?

Lastly, we come to the open seasons order, due any time now. Here again there has been a survey /consultation exercise and yet again all participants views were taken with no screening, so the anti- hunting lobby were given free rein to express sentiment over science. The counts accepted by the department were from our favourite birdwatch people A charity that derives much of its funding from government. This organisation was investigated by the Charities regulator for the period, January 2016 to August 2021. It is understood that the Regulator found that over half a million Euro earmarked for scientific projects was instead used as working capital and not properly ring-fenced for its intended purpose.

That the Department retains confidence in this organisation astounds many shooters. The red listing species on their data speaks volumes for the green /anti ethos of the relevant department and Minister. The lead shot ban on wetlands became law last February. To date no maps have been issued to identify wetlands for shooters. Confusion reigns and lead alternatives are in short supply.

As I slip towards my seventh decade I see no bright shoots of recovery, only the dark clouds of foreboding above. If we are to survive we field-sports people must find our voice and political clout or watch all we hold dear be taken from us. Has the time come for shooters to say NO?



*Young folk and practical conservation*



*Junior members of Darver-Drominiskin releasing mallard on club preserves*



*One of the pens built by members and our young enthusiasts*



# Lorrha/Rathcabbin Game and Conservation Club’s Grey Partridge reintroduction programme

During a club meeting in the Spring of 2023, members were discussing what the next conservation project should be after the success of the duck tubes in the previous years and talk came around to the re-introduction of Grey Partridge into the Parish.

The Grey Partridge (*Perdix Perdix*) at one time common in Ireland has been in steady decline and is nearly extinct in Ireland. There are a wild few coveys left in Ireland notably Boora in Offaly, and more recently Kilkenny & Carlow. These are present due to conservation projects like Boora and the National Association of Regional Game Councils (NARGC) Grey Partridge programme. Some older members of the club remember them in the area when they were younger, and they were frequently seen but this was approximately 45 -50 years ago.



*Club members (L-R) Chairman Robert Harding, John O’Meara Dan Hogan & Richie Delaney*

In 1991 the NARGC identified 7 counties where Partridge still existed Tipperary, Wicklow, Wexford, Galway,

Kildare, Offaly & Louth. But in the intervening years the populations have drastically declined due to changing farming practices and increased predation. They have also been taken off the open season list to protect the existing population.

In May 2023 we contacted the NARGC Grey Partridge Programme, who kindly gave us eggs from some of the birds on their projects. These were placed under silkie bantams.

At the same time Club members got together to build pens to hold the birds for future breeding. In total we built six 8ft x 16ft pens to hold the birds when they were ready. Needless to say everyone enjoyed the BBQ which was arranged for the workers.



*Pat O’Meara & Robert Harding enjoying the BBQ*





*Silkie Bantam with Partridge chicks*



*Junior members Sadhbh & Conall O'Crowley Putting up electric fence*

In the meantime, extensive vermin control was carried out in the parish especially Mink and Foxes as Partridge are ground nesting birds. We also started the planting of game crop where the birds will be released into the wild. The seeds include game buckwheat, white millet, titicaca quinoa, coleor kale, phacelia, chicory and others. Bags of game crop were provided to farmers to plant as part of their acre's initiative. This also allowed feed crop for wintering birds.

In September we got a further opportunity of full coveys of Partridge to bolster our project. This was given to us again from the NARGC project in Co. Dublin, where great work is being carried out. Derek O'Brien gave us excellent information on rearing them and his setup is excellent.

The next stages of the Lorrha /Rathcabbin project is to get information out to the local farming community on how to conserve the Grey Partridge which we are releasing, by promoting the planting of more game crop and, hopefully, more will take part in allowing pens on their land allowing further increase of the population.

We also hope to show this bird to the local community by bringing them to the local schools and showing the project in open days in the summer. We also hope to get information leaflets to the local community by the community shop 'SCEAL.'

In the coming months we hope that birds being released will survive and thrive and further breeding will take place, where we can hopefully bring a viable population in to the Parish. Watch this space for further updates.....

At present this is the first project in North Tipperary and hopefully more clubs across the county will take part in the project and, who knows, in the coming years the Grey Partridge will be as common as they once were.

It is projects like these that prove that the hunting community as a whole is important for the conservation of birds like the Grey Partridge, and these



projects also have a knock on effect for conservation of other birds and mammals, and it is all carried out from hunters' own initiatives and at their own expense.

*Editor's Note: We are delighted to feature the excellent practical conservation work of Lorrha/Rathcabbin Game and Conservation Club's Grey Partridge reintroduction programme. This not only is a huge conservation plus, it also helps to educate the young involved and also helps foster community goodwill.*



*The Partridge settled in well in our new pens*



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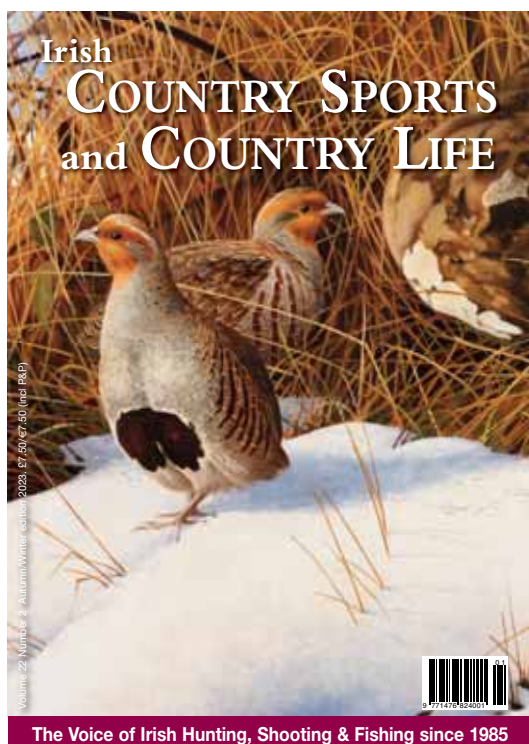
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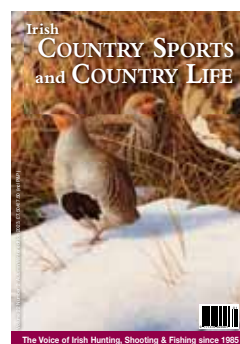


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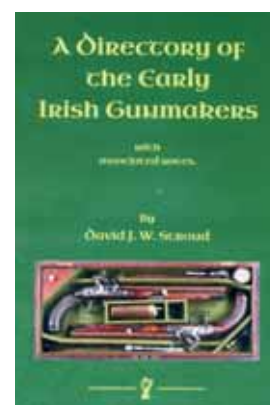


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LIGHTHOUSE

  
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# High stakes

*The Hindu Kush and the foothills of the Himalayas*

**T**he inclusion of licensed hunting in a conservation plan is a brave move – but the success of Pakistan’s markhor strategy shows that while the risks are many, the rewards can be immense. Simon K. Barr flies to the Hindu Kush to join indomitable septuagenarian Steve Hornady, whose day job is overseeing Hornady Manufacturing in Nebraska, USA

The mountains around us echoed with the sounds of partridge, or chukar as they call them here, and inside our hearts we willed them to relax and not disturb the remarkable flare-horned markhor. It was day one of our trip in the Hindu Kush, the foothills of the Himalayas. We had seen a herd through the spotting scope, breaching a ridge. It was sunrise, and the beguiling horns, long beards and draping capes of these unusual-looking creatures were silhouetted on the skyline, in all their rarified glory.

Fortune was favouring us, gifting us a unique spectacle, an incredible introduction to this celestial creature,

the national animal of Pakistan.

It was late in the season when Steve Hornady and I embarked on this bold adventure and, with spring approaching, the animals were moving to higher ground for the colder temperatures and snowy conditions of their usual high-altitude habitat. In order to get ourselves into a potential shooting position, we trekked into a valley bottom, while the ‘watchers’ attempted to move the animals by walking more than a thousand yards from them, using their human scent to gently move them. What could possibly go wrong?

As yet, these manoeuvres were fruitless, which came as little surprise to these experienced guides, who had already warned us that the markhor are an alert, agile species, with excellent eyesight. It’s difficult to get within shooting range without being detected, and the team of watchers typically spend several days in the mountains prior to a hunt, scouting the area in search of the right animal, tracking with binoculars, to see where the herds and older males are.

The undisputed king of the Capra genus proved elusive until day five. Each day, we would see a group traversing some far away slope, out of range, and would embark on some gnarly climbs to get into a solid shooting position. But our moves weren’t working, the weather was only getting warmer, and the opportunity was slipping away.

The long days were physically exhausting, for both myself and Steve, who impressively was in his 74th year. The steep slopes and rocky outcrops of the Hindu Kush terrain are treacherous, and hunters must be physically capable of withstanding both those and the harsh conditions of the unpredictable, often below freezing temperatures.

I wasn’t sure what impressed me more: Steve’s sheer resilience or the markhor’s resourcefulness. I then watched one of these mountain goats through a spotting scope with its head down, looking for greenery to eat, jump into a tree like a cat and start to eat the leaves of the higher limbs. I had my answer.



## A FIGHTING CHANCE

The many moments of glassing, binos in hand, provided plenty of opportunity to reflect on the importance of what has been achieved here in northern Pakistan. In recent decades, there has been significant concern about the markhor, with worryingly low populations putting the species on the International Union for Conservation of Nature's (IUCN) 'critically endangered' list. All three subspecies of markhor in Pakistan faced threats from habitat loss, poaching, and pressure from illegal hunting. The local goat farmers also saw them as a pest that competed with livestock for limited food sources. As a result, they were treated as a pest and killed indiscriminately.

It was the IUCN and the government of Pakistan that stepped in and helped the local communities see the markhor in a different light. They devised a plan

*We trekked into a valley bottom*

to protect the markhor as a whole and released a limited number of licences to hunt the older males past breeding age. They believed this move would offer hunters the chance, for a substantial fee, to have the experience to hunt selected mature males and the money from the licences could be invested back into the local community, offering a lifeline to the overall population. As part of the plan, watchers were employed to guard against poachers and guide hunters so that strict guidelines were followed to ensure the sustainability of the species.

Almost immediately the locals stopped viewing the markhor as a pest and started viewing them as a valuable resource. They stopped culling them and started protecting the diminished herds. They took pride in learning about them and their habits. They became custodians who protected them and

showed a small number of overseas hunters how to spot and stalk them in their natural habitat.

As a direct result of this strictly limited trophy hunting programme, markhor numbers in Pakistan have increased from about 2,000 to over 4,500. It has been so successful that markhor were removed from the 'critically endangered' list in 2015, and are now rated 'near threatened'.

Special Assistant to the Prime Minister on Climate Change, Malik Amin Aslam, says his office supported regulated hunting as a positive step for conservation. "Animals that have reached the end of their lives are put out for trophy hunting. While the government keeps 20% of the money generated from the licence auctions, the remaining proceeds go to the development of local communities,





which in return become custodians of the habitat and their animals and protect them from poaching,” he says. “Trophy hunting has proved successful in Gilgit-Baltistan where markhor, ibex and the Marco Polo sheep were almost extinct but are now thriving. It was all linked with trophy hunting.”

While many outside of the hunting community would be outraged by the idea of endangered animals being killed for conservation, the fact is that in Pakistan trophy hunting is a success story. When done with careful thought and scientific nous, hunting is a credible tool in wildlife conservation, and supports endangered species, particularly when all parties, including government, local agencies and local communities, are involved.

## DAY FIVE

There was excitement from one of the watchers. He had seen a group of markhor and in its ranks was a mature male, a good candidate for our licensed



*We glassed them over 1,000 yards away*

hunt. The group was still 1,300 yards away, so we sat patiently; it was now a waiting game – will they get close enough for a shot?

We watched the calm animals through the binoculars for five hours as

they moved from their initial position.

The closer they got, the more Steve had to hold his nerve, but at last, he could see the chance for a safe but still challenging shot. Steve’s shot proved his many years of mountain hunting

*The closer they got, the more Steve had to hold his nerve for the chance of a safe but still challenging shot*





experience. Finally at 480 yards using old - school holdover, aided by a ballistic solution from Leica's Geovid Pro 32, he fired a long, acute angled 178 grain projectile, which impressed everyone that witnessed it. Including him. I think he is one of the only people I know that shoots ammunition with his name on the bottom of every cartridge.

When the mature markhor cleanly dropped, unaware of us, or what was about to happen, it was way up on a sheer cliff. The watchers had to traverse death-defying terrain to carry the animal back to our position in the valley bottom. In return for their hard work, the watchers get the best cuts for the pot, a small but important thanks for the work they do for this remarkable conservation success story.

It was awe-inspiring to see this majestic animal up close, having spent the week glassing them from over a thousand yards away. We marvelled at its long, spiralled horns, which at up to 1.5m in length are seen as a symbol of strength and power in this region that all-too-often experiences such grave volatility and instability. Playing a

*Steve's shot proved his many years of mountain hunting experience*



*A mature male, a good candidate for our licensed hunt*

crucial role in the animal's survival, they are used for territorial battles and as a means of defence against predators, such as the snow leopard and Himalayan wolf.

It is clear why there is a market for

hunters to bag such an incredible trophy. But this label does very little to explain why people like Steve travel across the world for this experience. It says nothing about the adventure, or the gruelling challenge of the hunt. It says







*The watchers had to traverse death-defying terrain to carry the animal back to our position in the valley bottom*

nothing about the partnership with the local communities, which has resulted in a new bridge over the Indus river, an 8km pipeline that has brought fresh water to the villages, and the renovation of a local school. And it says nothing about the beauty of the region, the local culture, and the sustainable hunting practices that have been proven to be vital in preserving the species for future generations.

Trophy hunting has saved the markhor from extinction, and as someone who cares deeply about what his Hornady products are used for, this gives Steve immense satisfaction. But there is no happy ending here. In recent months, populations that were seeing such incredible growth in Pakistan have started to fall, in part due to increased

poaching, and in part due to border fencing which has restricted movement. The work of the watchers and custodians has never been so crucial, but judging by the grit and determination I witnessed, we can be confident that while the work of conservation is never over, the future of the markhor is in good hands.

#### KEY FACTS

Throughout the region, there are only 12 licences in total, with four a year for each of the three subspecies of markhor. Three of these are in the Hindu Kush, and the reserve we were on is privately owned by the Prince Saif family. The hunting season typically runs from November to April, and while the hunt may not be

for everyone, those who undertake it will be rewarded with breathtaking scenery, a challenging adventure, and the satisfaction of knowing that they are contributing to the conservation of a magnificent and endangered species.

#### KIT BOX

##### Outfitter

Caprinae Safaris  
caprinae.com

##### Leica Sport Optics

Geovid Pro 32 binoculars  
APO Televivid Spotting scope  
leica-camera.com/en-US/sport-optics

##### Hornady

Hornady 178gr ELD-X 300 RCM  
hornady.com

*The sustainable hunting practices have been proven to be vital in preserving the species for future generations*





# The Talla Des Man-eater Resurfaces

*Corbett's Rigby was a .275 (7x57) magazine rifle*

Born as a child of the Raj to Anglo-Irish stock of modest means, Jim Corbett had free reign over the forests of northern India, as he grew from a boy into a teenager, fully at home under the jungle canopy and intimately familiar with the ways of

the beasts and birds lurking within the greenery.

At first a sport hunter, like his more conventional contemporaries, Corbett became less inclined to hunt for the sake of it and focussed on accepting the task of shooting man-eating tigers and

leopards when others had failed to do so. In doing so and later recording his reminiscences in print, Corbett became the world's most celebrated hunter.

For his services he would take no fee, but insisted all other hunters vacate the area until he had succeeded in his quest.

He walked great distances in arduous conditions, with few possessions and limited equipment, in his search for notorious man-eaters, many with hundreds of victims to their account. Each time he did so, he took his life in his hands and carried the hopes and the future safety of countless villagers with him. In his hand, he often carried a Rigby rifle.

The rifle was presented to Corbett in 1907 as a token of appreciation from the authorities for his successful hunt for his first

*The Talla Des man-eater cubs*







*A sepia photograph from the time shows Corbett with the man-eater*

man-eater; the Champawat Tigress, a notorious man-eater, thought to have killed 436 people before meeting her end.

It was purchased from Manton & Co. in Calcutta; a company founded by a relative of the great Joseph Manton, who had apprenticed at James Purdey and Thomas Boss in the early 1800s. It became a successful store, selling the wares of most of Britain's gun and rifle makers.

Corbett's Rigby was a .275 (7x57) magazine rifle. Rigby records can trace it to the original order on 19th April 1905. Manton ordered '3 best Mauser Rigby sporting rifles, Nos. 2508, 2516 & 2517' at a cost of £39. 6s. 0d. It was part of an order which included some second quality .275s and a .350 Mauser, as well as accessories and cases.

The .275 was bought from Manton on behalf of Sir J.P. Hewett, who had a silver oval engraved 'Presented to Mr J.G. Corbett by Sir J.P. Hewett K.C.S.I. Lieutenant Governor of the United Provinces in recognition of his having killed a man-eating tigress at Champawat in 1907.'

### ***The tale begins of the man-eating tigress***

Corbett's Rigby was never destined to become a 'safe queen', it features in

many of his thrilling stories of man-eater hunts. Among those tales is that of the Talla Des man-eating tigress and her two unfortunate cubs.

Like many man-eaters, the tigress carried an injury which hampered the hunting of her usual prey, like chital and sambar deer. She had a deep wound in her leg, caused by the penetration of porcupine quills, which are barbed and impossible to remove. She must have been in constant pain for the eight years she stalked humans, accounting for around 150 souls during her reign of terror.

For decades, nothing more was

known about the Talla Des tigress than what Corbett had written in the 1940s. Then, in May 2023, Rigby received a message from a gentleman in Surrey, inside whose suburban home resided the skin of the tigress and within whose family history was some long-lost information about Jim Corbett and the fate of the Talla Des skin.

Before heading for leafy Surbiton, I re-read the story: It was on April 4 1929 that Corbett set out for the Talla Des tigress. It took several days by train and on foot to reach the village of Talla Kote, from where he began his quest, accompanied by the son of a woman who had been eaten by the tigress, by the name of Dungar Singh.

He soon found two tigers asleep in a clearing, over which he had a good view from his vantage point on a rock outcrop. He shot the first as they slept; being unable to distinguish cub from mother at 120 yards. The second, upon hearing the shot ran up the hill and presented itself broadside, looking back at its sibling, before falling to a second shot from Corbett's .275.

Some 25 years later he wrote 'the cubs had died for the sins of their mother.' They had proven easy, but the hunt had only just begun. The shots flushed the tigress from where she had been resting nearby but she was 200 yards away and running. 'I have never seen an animal fall as convincingly dead



*The actual rifle and the skin as it is today*



as that tiger fell at my shot,' wrote Corbett. However, events were to prove otherwise.

The dead tigress slipped down a slope until coming to rest on a sapling above a ravine. After a few minutes she fell and Corbett fired at her body as she did so, out of pure exhilaration. It seemed not to matter at the time but it left him short of ammunition; ammunition he would later need.

Walking to retrieve the fallen beast, Corbett was alerted to a presence, slowly scaling a bank 400 yards distant, clearly lame, clearly hit, but still moving. His shot missed and his rifle was empty. He could only watch as the tigress limped out of sight.

'Madho Singh came tearing down the hill with a fresh supply of ammunition' but it was too late. Corbett found cut hairs and a blood trail, 'But as night was now closing in and there was not sufficient light...I decided to return to the village...'.

After two more days of arduous and dangerous tracking of the wounded tigress, Corbett found her approaching him, as he rested with his back to a tree. She lay down 100 yards from Corbett's seat, but he could not get a clear shot and had to stalk her again when she moved on.

### ***The stalk was a a terrifying prospect***

He continued to stalk the wounded man-eater, a terrifying prospect for a man in robust good health but Corbett was suffering from an abscess in his inner ear so severe that he felt light-headed, and his left eye was swollen so much he could not see through it.

Add to this pain, the heat, the altitude, and the fatigue of tracking in mountains for hours on end without food and you get some idea of how tough and determined Corbett must have been to continue his pursuit regardless.

Overcome with vertigo, Corbett climbed into an oak tree to rest, and it was then his abscess ruptured, venting through his left ear and nose. Corbett



*The rudimentary travel box that housed the Rigby*

resumed his hunt feeling physically more able and less hindered by the infection.

A good night's sleep allowed him to recover further and the next day he got another shot at the tigress when she presented broadside at 60 yards. Corbett's shot was true, but the bullet passed through the animal without striking anything vital and she sprang forward and disappeared.

In his pursuit of the fleeing tigress Corbett almost launched himself over a cliff to certain death, saved only by grasping a sapling as he fell. After scrambling back to safety, Corbett checked his ammunition, 'satisfied it was one of a fresh lot I had recently got from Manton in Calcutta' and with a clear blood trail to follow, set off again.

He found the tigress hiding, poised to spring at him, in waist-high bracken and managed to shoot before she launched her attack, 'my first bullet raked her from end to end and the second bullet broke her neck'.

Corbett tells us that his first shot, fired on 7 April 1929, 'bushed' on the tiger's shoulder joint, the second, fired as she fell over the cliff, missed, as did the third, taken at 400 yards as she crested the hill. On April 12, his fourth shot, at 60 yards, had 'gone clean through' without hitting any vital organs and the fifth and sixth shots had been fatal.

So, the tigress was hit in the right

shoulder, mid-body and then frontally, twice, in the neck: four bullet holes.

When we visited the owner to inspect the skin, which is somewhat faded but in better condition than one might expect of an 80-year-old relic that has spent part of its life in India, the bullet holes did indeed correspond with Corbett's account of his shots. The tigress is relatively small but well mounted, in fierce, snarling pose by Van Ingen.

The owner explained that his great grandfather was born in 1875, in India, and was a civil administrator. He had returned to England in 1921 but he and Corbett, childhood friends, had remained in touch. It is likely that Corbett gave the skin to the owner's great grandfather in the early 1940s.

Looking at the tigress, alone in an upstairs room dedicated to her repose, she is recognisable as the same beast photographed back in May 1929. There is a close-up photograph of her with the grandchild of her last victim. The clear 'Y' shaped stripes either side of her head are unmistakable.

We reunited the Rigby .275 with the tigress for some photographs to record the occasion. They had last met on that fateful day; 12 April 1929, when her life was ended and the villagers of Talla Kote relived of their terror.

Only one other skin of a Corbett tiger is known to still exist. That was from the Thak Man-eater, which was given to





Sir J.P. Hewett had a silver oval engraved on the rifle which was presented to Corbett

the late Henry Walek of Oxford University Press in New York after Corbett's death.

I uncovered, in a provincial auction in 2021, some lost letters from Jim Corbett to his friend Sir William Ibbotson, among them were some photographs from several of his adventures, including images of the Talla Des tigress and her cubs.

Linking those old photographs and re-reading Corbett's incredible story of his hunt for the tigress and now contemplating her faded skin on the floor of a Home Counties bedroom somehow condensed the last century into a few places and objects. How our world has changed.

To learn more about John Rigby & Co., visit: [www.johnrigbyandco.com](http://www.johnrigbyandco.com).



By Frank Brophy

# The Mauser Revival

*The author's Mauser model '94 (1994) hunting rifle*

In the early 1800s members of the wider Mauser family circle operated independently as firearms manufacturers. Their individual products were highly regarded for excellent design and reliability. In 1873 Wilhelm Mauser convinced the family to combine and purchase the state firearms manufacturing facility at

Oberndorf, a small town south-west of Berlin. This would involve production of military weapons as well as their own sporting gun designs. Paul Mauser was then taken on as an apprentice and became a prolific gun designer, registering all patents in his own name despite the input of other workers. 1884 saw the family forming a new company,

Waffenfabrik Mauser AG, registered as manufacturers of sporting firearms – rifles and pistols – at the Oberndorf factory.

Of all designs patented, the Mauser 98 became their most successful rifle ever. It was in demand by sportsmen worldwide, while the K98 military version, equipped the German army into the 1900's and through two world wars. All patterns were renowned for their accuracy and long-range capability. Earlier Mausers of varying calibre used ammunition charged with black powder until the mid-1880's when smokeless nitrocellulose-based propellant powder was invented by a French scientist Paul Vieille in 1884. The new powder was rapidly adopted by munitions manufacturers worldwide.

The military K98's exceptional design and successful performance attracted major orders from several European countries in varying calibre. Several states were licensed to produce Mausers tailored to their specific requirements. Belgium, Serbia and Turkey equipped their military with Mausers adapted to their requirements, as did the Philippines, China and several South American countries. A 6.5x58 calibre Portuguese Mauser was ordered and supplied in 1904 stamped "Berlin," many are still in use today in Southern Africa – reminders of Portugal's colonial days.

Spain's firearms industry, centred around Eibar in the northern Basque area traditionally supplied its forces with black powder charged weapons until it was decided to adapt the Mauser system. Madrid specified that its Mauser-



*The company founder Paul Mauser*





*One and a half million youngsters were trained to use a .22 Mauser DSM34 in the 1930s.*

designed rifles should accept a 7x57mm cartridge which eventually proved so successful that Mauser switched to chambering its domestic production to that calibre.

***This extremely accurate firearm is highly regarded by Irish target-shooters***

During the 1892 Spanish-American war in Cuba, Spanish forces were

equipped with an early 7mm Mauser rifle that proved to be more advanced than the American side's .30-40 Krag-Jorgensen. Sweden's 6.5x55mm Mauser rifle, jointly designed with Norway, was manufactured in both Oberndorf and Sweden. This extremely accurate firearm is highly regarded in Irish target-shooting circles today – I still regret selling my 1904 “Swede” back in the 1990’s.

Mauser rifles made an appearance in Ireland when obsolete M1871 Infanterie Gewehr model 71 single-shot 11mm black powder rifles were used in the 1916 Rising. Better known as “Howth Mausers,” they have become collector’s items and currently command top prices at auction.

In the 1930s, Mauser produced a scaled down, otherwise identical version of the K98 rifle in .22 calibre designated



*Mauser 7x57mm rifles used in the Boer War*



DSM34. Their sole purpose was to teach youngsters to shoot - approximately 1.5 million children were trained in their use. It may have been quite exciting for teenagers to have free access to these firearms, unaware of what the future held. Around 50,000 DSM's were produced, today considered worldwide to be the best .22 rifle ever manufactured – also eagerly sought by collectors.

At the conclusion of WW2, the Oberndorf factory's location was within the area occupied by the French who understandably lost no time in stripping the place of machinery, tools, dies etc. All were rapidly transported to France, along with countless thousands of rifles. Mauser was permitted to manufacture a strictly limited number of hunting/sporting firearms using basic tools and leftover gun-parts. Previously employed gunsmiths and workers who had served in the German army were engaged in producing bolt-action rifles and small-bore pistols for the civilian market.

In 1948, the Soviet Union demanded that production should cease immediately and insisted that the Oberndorf works be entirely destroyed, creating an uncertain future for the company given its association with the Nazi regime. The factory interior was devastated leaving the outer building intact, along with some previously secreted machinery that remained undiscovered. Unknown to the Allies several Mauser employees had surreptitiously smuggled out company documents, reports, blueprints, designs and photographs between 1945 – 1948.

One particular foreman had accumulated a huge archive that he kept hidden in a wardrobe!

### ***Now the family are 'back in the business'***

In 1950, the Mauser family decided to go back into business. All of this important documentation discreetly surfaced and with the purchase of up to date machinery, production of rifles and pistols recommenced. The Allies apparently turned a blind eye which encouraged management (tongue in cheek?) to thank the French authorities for removing all the old machinery, making space for the new equipment. While pistols and rifles from .22 calibre up to the larger big game rifles were manufactured to Mauser's exacting standards, sales never reached pre-war figures. It's possible that association with two world wars had a negative impact.

Production continued slowly until 1995 when Mauser was taken over by Rhein-Metall Berlin AG which then formed a new company in 1996 – Mauser-Werke Oberndorf Waffensysteme GmbH. The new owners rapidly sold Mauser on to S.I.G. in 1999. S.I.G. ceased all firearms manufacture in 2000 and Mauser was then taken over by Luke and Ortmeier Group – the same company that also owned the John Rigby and Co. business.

Today both companies are producing world-class sporting firearms. Rigby production remains in London using Mauser-built actions in their big game rifles. Other European manufacturers

such as CZ and Zastava also use Mauser-designed actions in their large calibre hunting rifles. Mauser sporting rifles are currently manufactured to the same exacting standards by Blaser in their Baden-Wuttermberg facility. The original Oberndorf factory is no longer associated with Mauser although its new owners produce and export well-known brands of Police/Military firearms worldwide.

### ***Mauser rifle actions are 'second to none'***

Since its foundation, Mauser has designed and manufactured a wide range of sporting/hunting rifles and pistols for the civilian market. Their rifle actions are still considered to be second to none – the yardstick by which others are judged. Today, Mauser's legendary smooth bolt-actions provide an excellent platform for hunting rifles of all calibre. Other features include enhanced trigger mechanisms and safety catches. Their 7x57mm round is still a leading contender in the sporting rifle world where even Rigby's revered .275 round is considered to be a Mauser offspring.

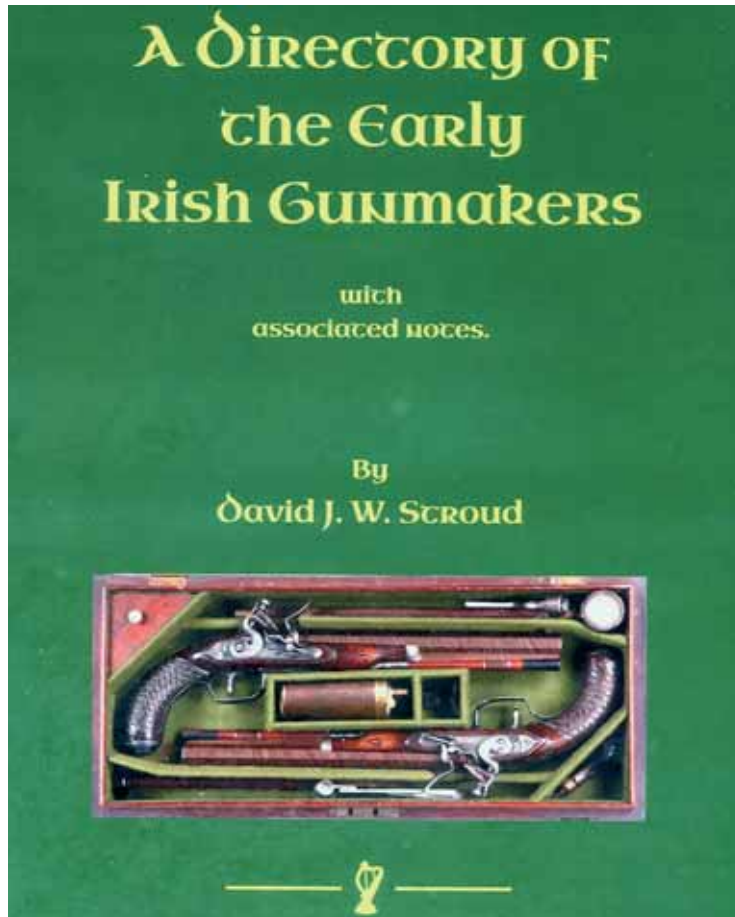
Recently a colleague was offered a 1930's .22 Mauser rifle for £50 by a gentleman who just wanted to get rid of it. He snapped up the offer - while we waited in anticipation hoping it might be a model DSM 34. No such luck! On a personal note my model '94 (1994) hunting rifle is stamped "Mauser-Werke Oberndorf" indicating that it had been built in one of the final production runs at the old Oberndorf factory. Despite its upcoming 30 years of use and occasional offers to buy, I have no plans to part with it.



*The stamp shows a build date of 994 in one of the final production runs in Oberndorf*



# A Directory of the Early Irish Gunmakers



The foreword to the book describes it as a ‘one stop shop’ for those interested in the history of Irish gunmaking and the early Irish guntrade where ‘names, dates, and locations of Irish gunmakers can be traced and tracked.’

Records of the Irish guntrade used go back to 1489 and the first firearms to be recoded in Ireland – a gift from Germany to the then Governor of Ireland, the Earl of Kildare. During the 17th Century the Dublin Mayor and Aldermen approved 32 Freeman gunsmiths. Taking us forward into the 18th Century the author records that there were an additional 29 Dublin gunsmiths recorded.

Although Dublin was the seat of the guntrade in Ireland, the provincial trade was also strong in Belfast, Cork and Limerick.

Dave covers this trade in a very easily referenced fashion by detailing the guntrade county by county of the whole 32 counties. Each county has its own section listing the gunmakers and providing illustrations their trade labels and advertising and some b/w and colour photographs of weaponry

produced under their name. So if you have old Irish weaponry this book should be one of the best reference works to trace the history of the maker.

## **The Author**

David Stroud was born in Maidenhead, Berkshire in October 1953 and was educated at St Luke’s Secondary Modern School. He went on to study English and Business Studies at East Berkshire County College.

David initially worked as a trainee draughtsman in the electronics industry but moved into the automotive industry following his passion for motor cars.

He used his engineering skills in various technical roles in Italy and



*Trulock & Harris Dublin Pair of Two shot Turnover Percussion Pistols*



Germany and he has travelled extensively throughout Europe and both North and South America.

His interest in weaponry started at an early age and for the past thirty-five years he has been researching the history of the gunmakers of Ireland. This

included articles for Irish Country Sports & Country Life magazine. He also has produced a globally read blog available as a free forum at [www.ramrodantiques.blogspot.com](http://www.ramrodantiques.blogspot.com).

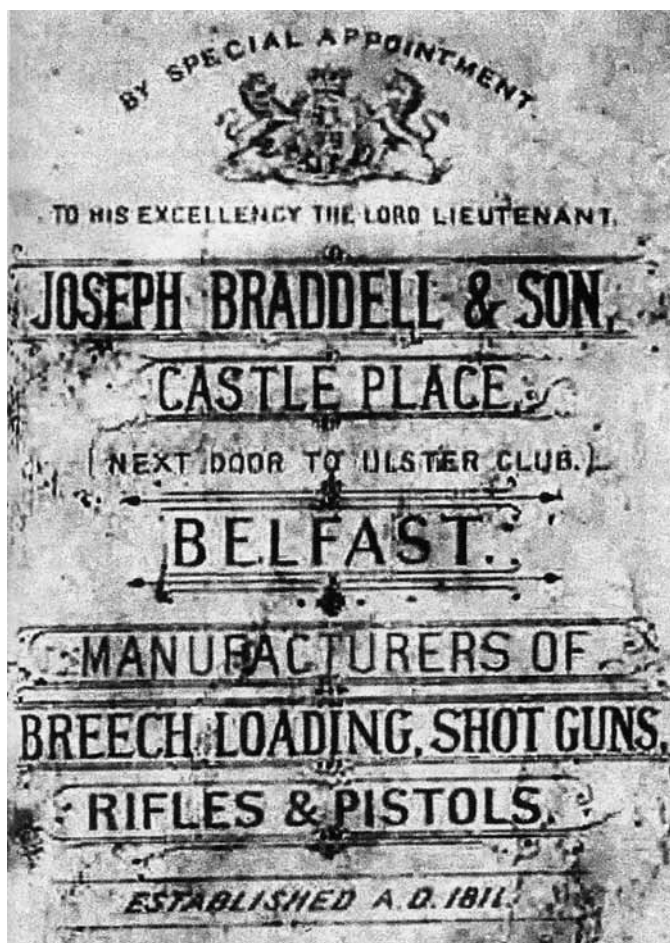
Like many of our readers a book David always wanted in his

own library was a directory of the gunmakers of Ireland.... Well finally, here it is!

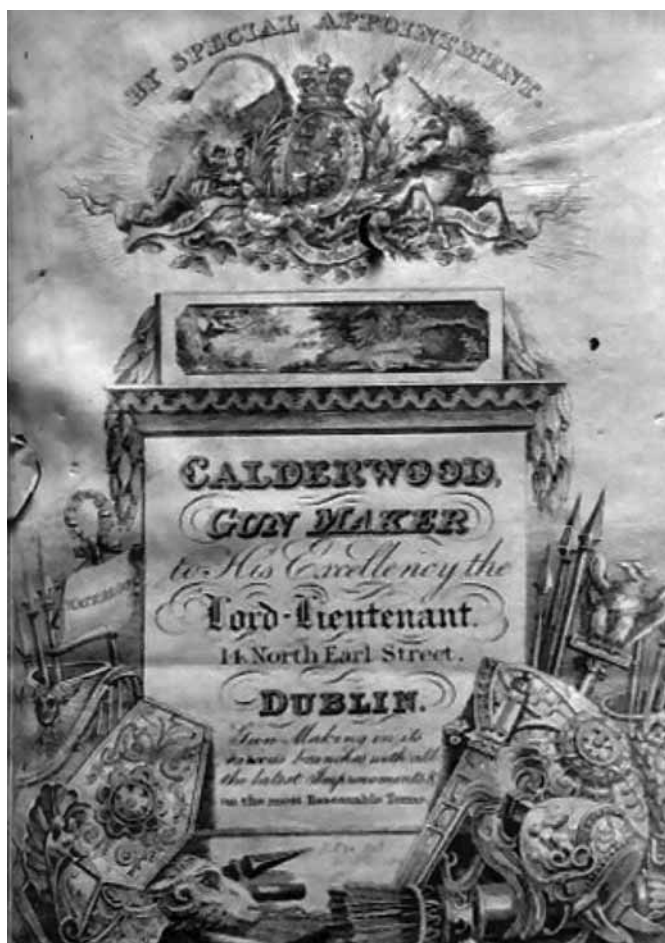
The book can be ordered from David at a price of £60. To order call him on 07818 470123

E: [davejwstroud@hotmail.com](mailto:davejwstroud@hotmail.com)  
[www.ramrodantiques.co.uk](http://www.ramrodantiques.co.uk)

### *Illustrations from the book*



*Trade Label Braddells Belfast*



*Trade label Calderwood Dublin*



*Pair of Pistols by McCormick of Belfast*



*Pepper Box revolver by Rigby of Dublin*



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

## SEASON OF 2023 WAS MIXED BUT OVERALL GOOD

It is great to be able to report yet another season has concluded with some reasonable salmon returning to our rivers although there are many clubs unhappy with the decline this year. The heatwave weather in June delayed the fishing proper until the deluge of water in July and early August before the backend run came in September with some notable memories that we will cherish in our long winter ahead.

Our main event of the year by far, was time spent in the Four Courts challenging the ALAB decision that awarded a salmon farming license to MOWI at Shot Head in Bantry Bay. This was an epic battle between the

barristers from each side which and we are very hopeful that our well put case will bear fruit with a decisive win very soon which we hope to report in the next issue.

FISSTA wish to thank all clubs and member for their support once again this season as we await the announcement of the new Inland Fisheries Board which was suspended by the Minister earlier this year.

### BIOSECURITY AND INVASIVE SPECIES

Professor Jaimie Dick, Professor of Invasion Ecology, School of Biology Sciences, QUB has said that Invasive

alien species will continue to arrive in Ireland and, alongside those already here which have already caused enormous and irreversible economic, ecological and societal damage.

He encouraged more research through the establishment of an all-Ireland forum, with key representatives across Government, academia, NGOs, other stakeholders and practitioners, leading to practical action on the ground. He stated that New funding and Research and Development projects are required that target specific invaders (e.g. Asian Clam, curly waterweed) and improve overall strategies and tactics (e.g. biosecurity, enforcement).

We still have a window to protect our biodiversity, fisheries and economic and food stability, but that is closing rapidly without meaningful actions against invasive alien species current and future.

IFI says it is committed to confronting the problem that good progress was being made having convened a number of high level meeting with the NPWS (National Parks and Wildlife Service).

We understand the moves are being made so that IFI would take statutory responsibility for aquatic and riparian zone species that directly affect our fisheries. So along with any new legislation, it is vital that FISSTA lobby



Kevin Vernocy with a nice September fish



for the appropriate funding for same is allocated in time so that new measures are in place when the season opens on the Western lakes next February, as the threat to fisheries from the Shannon Catchment in relation to the spread of quagga mussels to other waterbodies including the Corrib. FISSTA have already lobbied for an all-island forum on invasive species to encompass research, development, and policy application and there are many summary recommendations on the table

### **NATIONAL INLAND FISHERIES FORUM (NIFF)**

FISSTA, asked NIFF to record that despite intensive lobbying to close some draft fisheries, the 2023 commercial netting season opened up once again IFI's commercial draft net licenses being issued against the scientific evidence that the fisheries be closed in Cork harbour area and other bays. FISSTA noted the issuing of these licences are contrary to NASCO guidelines and our members have raised this issue at our Fishery District Committee, Cork, Kerry region to no avail. Also the campaign will continue to bring the basic procedures (such as briefing documents and minutes) to the

Fishery District.

Committees in the form of terms of reference/constitution which are now urgently required as the absence of one has resulted in reopening of closed fisheries to the detriment of wild Atlantic salmon stocks.

FISSTA proposed that for the next NIFF meeting agenda that IFI present a policy paper so that the Chair of NIFF host a discussion to explore the feasibility of an outright purchase of all draft nets.

### **CLEAN WATER QUALITY ISSUES ON OUR WATER BODIES**

Nationally, the issue of algal blooms became alarming as the turning of the water green told its own tale that all was not well underwater. Lough Neagh was engulfed this year by cyanobacteria, known as blue-green algae, which can be toxic and the situation has caused outrage.

Thankfully, our Republic of Ireland government must still comply with EU HD and complete the annual assessments. But FISSTA wonders how improved is our water quality since the most recent assessment was published?

But while farmers on both sides of

the border are under the microscope because the derogations on nitrates expire for EU countries, unlike in Northern Ireland where they can have their payments reduced for intentional or negligent breaches, with previous rules allowing deductions of up to 100%. However, legislation that came into effect in 2022 reduced this threshold significantly.

Under the (EU) existing arrangements, certain repeated negligent breaches can be considered intentional, attracting very high financial penalties, but according to DAERA figures it was revealed that Lough Neagh and two of its waterways have recorded the largest number of medium to high level pollution incidents over the last two years. Since 2021, some 2,006 pollution incidents of all levels have been recorded across our waterways, and therein lies the problem with light touch regulation.

### **PROGRESS ON THE LIFFEY**

FISSTA congratulate Marc Mac Aindriu for leading a special team of dedicated salmon conservation minded people that are progressing the Liffey Salmon Project. There are 3 dams and excessive amount of weirs stopping the Liffey from free flowing. All these barriers have a significant impact on sediment transportation, the process that is absolutely necessary for river biodiversity. Most weirs were built to run mills in old days and have no purpose anymore. To make it clear- they should be removed! In short, there will be no trout and salmon spawning if there's no free, loose gravel beds where fish can build their nests. To address this issue, the LSP had a number of historical spawning sites on the lower Liffey improved under the guidance of Alan Sullivan from Rivus Ecological Engineering team. The biggest credit goes to Marc Mac Aindriu for leading the Liffey Salmon Project!

### **PROTEST AGAINST SALMON FARMING**

The CEO of the North Atlantic



*The Yellow River in full spate*



Salmon Fund, Elvar Fridrikssen, kindly sent us a short note to say: "Over 3,000 protesters showed up in front of our Reykjavik parliament supporting the demands to ban open pen sea farming in Iceland. - putting an end to ruining the unique Icelandic wildlife and environment with the production of what also is claimed to be poison food made from a foreign species (Norwegian). The last 2 km in a protest walk led by a tractor that at arrival at the parliament dumped around 30 deformed farmed salmon which come from a recent escape in Iceland. Closed contained Land based farming is the only solution to the pollution!"

Closer to home, Scottish salmon comes from feedlots in the sea. On average each one of these discharges fish slurry in to the ocean equivalent to the pollution from town of 20,000 people or a dairy unit of 3000 cattle. Our seas should not be salmon farm sewers. Anyone consuming Scottish salmon has to take responsibility for this wildlife genocide.

### **BOYNE VALLEY NATIONAL PARK ANNOUNCED**

FISSTA will be lobbying the new group conducting the multi agency master plan to include IFI and the River

Boyne to be developed, not just that small bit of river on the Dowth demesne but the entire catchment so that our wild Atlantic salmon return in abundance to the entire beautiful Boyne. The "master plan" to secure and manage the site is expected to take two years to complete and FISSTA will be pressing for a Dodder type catchment management plan for the entire river.

### **POLLUTER MUST PAY - LEGISLATION FROM EU**

New rules to improve water quality across Europe have been passed by the European Parliament, but it will take too long for those towns to clean up their act. However, we welcome this new water quality law at long last.

Negotiations will soon begin with member states to agree on a final text before the law can start to be enacted across the European Union. The new law has been described as one of the most significant overhauls of EU water policy in over 30 years.

### **NEW DEAL TO PAY NETS-MEN IN NORTH ATLANTIC TO SAVE SALMON**

FISSTA attended the NASCO conference this year in New Brunswick, Canada where we are glad to report the

continued support for our fish in the feeding grounds. Thanks to the partnership of Atlantic Salmon Federation and North Atlantic Salmon Fund (which we are founding members) the 2018 deal made with the Greenland and Faeroes nets-men to sign an agreement that compensates for protection of our stocks in the feeding ground's continues with new provisions being agreed.

FISSTA met up with Bill Taylor Chairman of ASF and Fridliefur Gudmundsson Chairman of NASF at the beginning of the 40th NASCO meeting to review ICES stocks data and we were assured of their continued support for us in Ireland. Therefore the protection of our fish deal will be renewed for another year thus allowing for stocks to return stronger than the amount this past three years.

ASF and NASF were very pleased to learn of FISSTA's fight against sea-lice and our multi pronged strategy that included challenging Mowi at every step in the courts. So here's to the next couple of years of improving returns and hopefully a little bit earlier than before so that, in the true spirit of Orri Vigfusson RIP, his memory and vision for our wild salmon lives on for us all to embrace.



*Salmon anglers Denis and Cuan on the Glen River, Donegal*



# ‘International Women’s Fly Fishing Day’ (IWFFD) and Women’s Fly Fishing in Ireland

**T**hey say that good ideas can spring from a very small thought or as a result of a passing comment.

I made one such passing comment in 2019.

I was chatting with an online friend from West Virginia, USA – Pamela Dunlap. Like me she is an avid fly-fisher and is passionate about getting more women into our sport. We both organise events for women to come together to learn to fly fish or to improve skills. My passing comment was that we should organise an event on the same day and call it ‘International Womens Fly Fishing Day’ (IWFFD).

And that was it. It was a simple idea.



*Maddy Kelly, Co-founder of #iwffd, from Co Down in Northern Ireland fishing at Straid Fishery.*



*Pamela Dunlap, Co-founder of #iwffd, from Hurricane WV, USA, fishing on the South Branch of the Potomac River in Cabins, WV.*

Over Christmas 2019 though, we made plans to use our contacts in order to have groups of women in as many countries as possible out fly fishing for the first IWFFD on Saturday 12th September 2020.

And then Covid intervened and wrecked everything.

Basically the first IWFFD was cancelled before it had even got off the ground until a few months later, on a day in July 2020, when I walked into my kitchen. My inner voice was saying,

*‘Post photos on Facebook at 11 am and watch the day unfold across the world’.*

The idea for IWFFD was now even simpler for us as co-founders. Photos could be posted despite the many restrictions that had been imposed by the various governments throughout the world on people meeting up. My only problem was that I’d tended to steer clear of social media as much as

possible and now here I was planning a day that would depend on its many platforms for success. I went on a steep learning curve.



*Julie Cook, from Southland, NZ, currently the most easterly poster on #iwffd, fishing on the Tongararo River in the Waikato District, North Island, NZ*

September 9th of this year saw the 4th IWFFD. In total, since it started, there have been approximately 2,000 posts from 23 countries with women from all over the world talking about their fly fishing experiences. The number of women who are actively involved in getting other women interested in fly fishing is incredible.



*Cat White, California, USA, currently one of the most westerly posters on #iwffd, fishing on Henry's Fork River in Idaho, USA.*



In a chat with Corie Berrigan from Minnesota she mentioned the activities that her club was undertaking to promote women into flyfishing. Of course I asked how many women were in her club. Her reply seemed to indicate that she hadn't read my question because she answered 1,100. I queried it and she replied that her club in northern Minnesota is a women's flyfishing club and has 1,100 members. Then she proceeded to say that hers is not the only fly fishing club for females in Minnesota and that other clubs have mixed membership. I was astounded but not as much as when I did some research and gathered a few statistics.

The USA state of Minnesota covers an area of just under 90,000 square miles with a population of just over 5 million. Ireland covers 32,500 square miles with a population of almost 7 million.

I know I am not comparing like with like. Minnesota with its dense forests

and huge rivers and lakes is sparsely populated and people tend to live off the land especially in rural areas including hunting turkey, goose, pheasant and sometimes elk and moose as well as fishing.

But surely in Ireland we could have more women flyfishing. I know there must be women in Ireland who'd like to fly fish but they just haven't heard of it yet.

A recent report from the USA on fishing states that 54.5M Americans went fishing in 2022, up 2.4M on 2021 and that 36% of all anglers in 2022 were female. The number of women fishing in the USA is increasing as is the number of women who are making their living in the angling sector including becoming guides. Minnesota has a low rate of guides that are women. It stands at 5% for that state. The number of female guides in Ireland is nowhere near 5%.

Orvis ran an 8-year campaign in N America called '50/50 On the Water' with the aim that by the year 2020, fifty percent of all anglers would be female. A lot of work and funding went into this programme. When I started fishing over 30 years ago my understanding was that the percentage of anglers in the USA who were female was 14%. That figure is now 36% and it's great to see it.

The statistics in Ireland could reflect similar and at a time when angling is dwindling in Ireland the female demographic could be and should be worked with.

International Womens Flyfishing Day is always the 2nd Saturday in September and the next one will be Saturday 14th September 2024.

More information may be found at <https://www.facebook.com/groups/573597536965118/>

Or email [info@iwffd.org](mailto:info@iwffd.org)



*Federation of Irish Salmon  
& Sea Trout Anglers*

Conaidhm na Slat Iascairí Bradáin agus Breac Geal

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Conaidhm na Slat Iascairí Bradáin agus Breac Geal

Secretary: NOEL CARR, Teelin Rd, Carrick, Co. Donegal  
Tel: 074 9730300. Email: [fissta2017@gmail.com](mailto:fissta2017@gmail.com)



# IWFFD attracts competitors from all around the world

Northern Ireland



Argentina



Norway



Lough Mask Ireland



Iceland



South Africa



Argentina







# The First Flush

*Autumn brings its own unique beauty to the countryside.*

The first drops of rain fall on the parched yellow grass, the little car park by the river is dusty, ground baked hard by weeks of drought and scorching sunshine. Now the sky is filling with burgeoning black clouds, the air is heavy with impending thunder. The stream is down to its bones - fears of a pollution incident in the reduced flows are never far away, the massive fish kill in 2008 occurred in just these conditions but so much has changed since then.

Later in the evening and back home in bed I listen to the lashing rain drumming off the roof and windows, it's still warm and I can smell the wet grass and tarmac through the open window. I look forward to this downpour flushing fresh water into the watershed, refreshing pools and runs, washing away the green algae which covers the gravels. Far out in Lough Neagh there are dollaghan trout waiting to ascend



*Summer gives way to autumn amidst a blaze of colour*



the river, but until the first flush of fresh water they will patiently hold their ground.

The following day I am treading the banks of the Six Mile Water, my springer spaniel snuffling through the long grass, but the rabbits from the previous night have long gone into their dry burrows. The river is only four or five inches up on the gauge but it has been refreshed – the algae is being swept away revealing cleaning gravels and bright green fronds of water crowfoot.

The weed has grown well this year, it provides cool shade and cover for insects and fish, releases oxygen into the water and in low flows it forms channels where the current sweeps the gravel clean and trout can feed. Our fry from last years' spawning run are thriving, vast shoals inhabit every clump of weed, a joy to behold.

Now the fresh water has stimulated a hatch of blue winged olives which are drifting down like miniature sailing boats. Swallows and sand martins hawk up and down the river snapping up the flies and warblers and wagtails pick them off the bushes. Trout and salmon parr are picking off the insects trapped on the surface, energetic splashing rises as they seize the flies before they can lift to safety.

The winter plan of predator and pollution control is paying dividends, stocks and recruitment seem to be fine, habitat enhancement is providing the environment for the juvenile population to thrive, an eighteen inch size limit of one fish and careful catch and release policy over several years has ensured our treasured large brood fish can populate the spawning redds come autumn time.

### ***We expect migratory fish as the rains come***

As June gives way to July, the rains continue and become more frequent, a huge storm engulfs Ireland and the rivers are pushed up the banks and into low lying fields. The flush of fresh water now stimulates our migratory



*The black buddagh have arrived and Guideline ambassador Andy McClelland is no stranger to big dollaghan!*

fish, the salmon which have been lying offshore and in the estuaries surge into the rivers, invigorated by the fresh, oxygenated flows.

Back in Lough Neagh, the smaller dollaghan have been gathering at the river mouth and decide that the time is right to negotiate the streams. Shoals of 'dollies' from one to three pounds pile up the little stream, jostling in the pools and racing up the fish pass by the weir. These smaller fish provide great sport on light tackle and club members pursue them with salmon patterns and muddler

minnows by night and lures, spiders, traditional wets and nymphs by day. Although the average size is small in the first run of dollies, there will be the odd specimen and these tend to lie in certain areas year after year, two dollaghan over 10lb were recorded by the same angler before June was out!

The shoals of fish attract other wildlife species and the otters follow them up from the Lough. They are often accompanying anglers fishing at night and become accustomed to seeing people, sometimes coming a little too





*The mouth of the Six Mile Water as it meets Lough Neagh where the pollution is all too obvious.*

close for comfort – they have been known to relieve an angler of his dollaghan while he was playing the fish! These animals are an indicator of the

health of the river, they require a thriving population of fish and enrich a visit to the river by their playful antics – they also play havoc with any mink or

rats which they come across and anyone who has witnessed an otter crunching on a squealing rat will understand what a predator they are!



This happened to me one dark autumn evening as I waded quietly down the river beside a high bank. I had seen the otter earlier in the night but it had swum past downriver and I'd forgotten about it until a rustling in the high bank directly above my head indicated that he'd come back up – only this time he nailed a rat which squealed nearly into my ear – I nearly jumped out of my waders! Another night I witnessed two young otters thrashing a heron they caught in the streams, they played with it for half an hour before administering the final coup de grace and putting it out of its misery – nature can be cruel at times!

Now the summer has given way to autumn and as the Harvest Moon indicates the autumn equinox, from here on our days become shorter as the daylight gradually accedes to the dark hours. The trees are burnished with autumnal shades of reds, orange, copper and gold and the leaves tumble to the still waters on the autumn breeze. High overhead the music of migrating geese echoes as they return from their Scandinavian summer haunts and the wildfowl will graze on the last cut barley stubbles as the farmer finishes harvesting the fields of gold. These visitors from the far north will be familiar with the amazing phenomenon of the Northern Lights, aurora borealis, which can be viewed from our more remote shores on clear winter nights.

### ***The river at this time of year is a fine location to enjoy the Irish countryside***

Along with the beautiful colour of the autumn leaves there are hawthorns, elderberries, rowan trees laden with their fruits, crab apples, beech nuts and chestnuts provide an abundant harvest for pheasants, wood pigeons and squirrels eager to store up energy for the lean months of winter.

Under the still waters of the deep pools our dollaghan and salmon lie patiently, waiting for the spawning urge to return. The last hefty specimens are now leaving the vast 153 square miles

of Lough Neagh to inhabit the stream and the angler has a chance to encounter one or more of the three races which grace our waters – the gillaroo, the Buddagh and the Black Buddagh, the 'big fat fellow' in Gaelic.

The latter are thick-set, heavy shouldered specimens which run the high water in the wake of the autumnal storms which lash across our lands at this time of year. When hooked, they tend not to jump like salmon but bore down doggedly into the depths, seeking shelter in tree roots or around sunken rocks. So many more big specimens are lost than landed, but that is the nature of angling for these fascinating fish.

Our catch and release policy enables these beautiful specimens to spawn repeatedly and each return to the lough ensures they become increasingly larger, specimens over 20lb have been landed. Photographic records reveal that some dollaghan have been caught numerous times, but their subsequent release ensures they reach their spawning beds then out to Lough Neagh to put on more weight, a fantastic cycle and sustainable angling. Right now, in the depths of autumn, we are thinking about our spawning stock and are in the process of delivering forty tonnes of spawning gravel to a primary nursery stream and fencing off river margins to filter run-off from the fields.

As the low autumn sun sets on another great angling season, I reflect back on the hot, dry spring of parched ground and shrunken streams. It seems a long way back now, but the season really started with storms that brought the river to life, that first flush!

### ***Is Lough Neagh rapidly becoming Northern Ireland's septic tank?***

Finally, one last comment about the appalling crisis on Lough Neagh, our largest natural body of water in Europe. The blue-green algae was always an accident waiting to happen; reportedly unfettered industrial farming has made Northern Ireland the filthiest country in

Europe. We are actually importing slurry across the border, and despite this there are still additional fertilisers being spread across the country.

Field sampling for phosphates and nitrates indicate an abundance of nutrient in soils. but still we press on with more and more intensive farming and the increased need to dispose of the waste in the countryside. The resultant run-off dumps all of this from fields into our watercourses and Lough Neagh has become the septic tank of Northern Ireland - so good to know that's where much of our drinking water comes from!

So you've got to ask, who is responsible? A policy of rampant expansion of industrial farming without thought for effluent disposal and a grant system which allows this to happen possibly, politicians who are perhaps unduly pressured by the mid-Ulster farming vote? An Environment Agency which is tethered to DAERA when it should be acting independently? A government which doesn't reflect or respect the will of its constituents in respect of our environmental heritage?

There was so much talk about the restrictions imposed by the EEC and some have asked if Brexit means agriculture has a free licence to pollute with impunity, for developers to build over our wildlife corridors and impose on the most sensitive and important environmental habitats? Where are we going to find leaders who can act with integrity and respect, who understand and respect the cultures, traditions and importance of our countryside, is there anyone with influence who can stop what some might call a culture of greed and destruction?

Covid-19 has given everyone an appreciation of the outdoors, Northern Ireland's population deserve to be listened to, we want a cleaner countryside which is safe to bathe in, which is safe to take your dog for a walk, so when are our political leaders going to step up and represent us rather than hiding behind excuses? Only time will tell.





# Angling quotas?

*A couple of nice fish for supper - the very essence of recreational angling*

**C**ommercial Fishermen need to have a quota to fish commercially. I have no doubt that there are more recreational anglers than commercial fishermen. Having attended meetings which provide advice to the EU Commission on fishing for many years as a “stakeholder.” I have seen both sides of arguments about how commercial fishing is affected by angling. Anglers are represented by the European Anglers Alliance which represents angling bodies all over Europe, even if most anglers may not have heard of them.

Anyway, the EAA stood firm and because Sea-bass stocks were declining and it was decided to introduce a two fish limit for part of the year for anglers and no commercial fishing for part of the year also. This did not go down well with the fishing industry but Sea-bass are now showing signs of recovery. Angling was not totally banned as some would have liked. Even the definition of

recreational angling is still discussed. To me if you sell your catch it is not recreational angling and you should be considered a professional fisherman with all the regulations that come with that title.

I can assure anglers that the EAA does look after our interests, but it is not easy when the fishing industry can quote landings and anglers cannot. Best example of this was when Industry tried to blame anglers for about 25% of the mortality of Sea-bass in European waters.

In fairness, Ireland had recognised the decline of Sea-bass and introduced a bag limit and at the time no commercial fishing for them, little information was available on recreational catches, Ireland had two fish limit for anglers but other countries had no or very generous limits. But trying to say that 25% of bass catches were down to angling?

The majority of EU countries did not have a bag limit on catches, or if they

did it was very big a bag limit on recreational catches was considered unnecessary compared to commercial fisheries. The Industry did not see it this way. Indeed there were very few sea fish in Europe with recreational quota and they were all very scarce, Baltic Cod, Mediterranean Bluefin Tuna, to name the ones I know about.

## ***Some angling behaviour can be indefensible***

To put this into context, a commercial industry representative told me of seeing a charter boat full of folk land back in harbour with them all carrying big bags full of fish. All to be eaten no doubt, but professional fishermen catch these fish for a living. Worse, that evening he returned to the pier and found one of the bags of fish dumped beside a bin. Perhaps too much bother to prepare. It is hard to defend behaviour like this.

I don't try.





*I think everyone should be able to take their kids to the local pier to catch a few mackerel*



*A nice conger eel - small conger make good eating*

Bag limits for charter boats is a difficult one, as anglers can simply book a different boat. Skippers themselves know when anglers are serious, or out to fill a bag to bring home. They can - and some do - only bring serious anglers to where they know the prize fish are, others can be brought to Pollock and Mackerel spots. If I mention to someone that I am going fishing and they ask me for a few fish, I tell them OK - if I get some - but I add if they really need fish then go to a fish shop. I might not catch any. If mackerel show up inshore after sprat or whitebait they can be easy to catch. My local pier gets a run most years and the seals know it. Many a fish is grabbed by a seal looking for an easy meal but they risk getting hooked. They pull the feathers or hooks out so it is not really a problem for them.

### ***So who decides the quotas?***

The International Council for the Exploration of the Sea (ICES) is the body who assess stocks and recommends allowable catches for

commercial species on an annual basis. Stocks are assessed by groups of scientists from National bodies in each European country with fishing interests. Their recommendations then go the STECF which considers socio-economic impacts. Then the Commission draw up the quotas, then Ministers and Departments fight over quota swaps and who got what at the end of one year for catches the following year.

Bluefin and other Tuna catches are regulated by the International Council for the Conservation of Atlantic Tuna ICCAT. At present they base their quotas on historical quota records, which is why the UK can get a small quota but Ireland cannot. Yet it seems movement of stocks due to global warming has been missed by ICCAT.

Another species that was in serious decline was the Spur-dog. It was estimated that the population in the NE Atlantic had declined by 95% at one point. They are a popular food in France and in the UK, but not really eaten in



Ireland. I remember catching them as a kid while fishing for Mackerel on feathers. Commercial fishing for them was banned a number of years ago, and I am happy to say that populations are already showing signs of recovery. Their biology means they are very slow to reproduce and as they form spawning aggregations lots of pregnant females can be caught in one haul.

The total protection of Spur-dog was opposed by the French and English mainly and the UK is now negotiating with the EU to catch them again in their waters. While still protected, they are slowly showing signs of recovery and seem to be returning to some of their old haunts. The fishing industry still catches them so is hoping they can soon sell them again, as no one likes throwing caught fish back even if a proportion of them may survive. The so-called ban-on discards is progressing very slowly, even now concentrating on avoiding catches of unwanted fish. Anglers have the opportunity to catch and release fish relatively unharmed, proven many times by tagging programmes which have shown that individual fish can be caught and released many times.

The whole issue resolves around the fact that recreational anglers do not have the data necessary to disprove industries claims that recreational fishing is threatening some stocks. If this means that all anglers will have to provide an annual return of weight of fish caught or a licensing system so we know about how many regular anglers there are. I don't know, but I see a large role for angling clubs and charter skippers in estimating weights of fish caught, but this should not be considered in a negative way. It improves our chances of conserving stocks for future generations. We all need the data.

Freshwater fish had no limits until relatively recently, but again it is down to the individual angler to not retain young fish. There have been many nasty interactions between local anglers and others who consider any fish caught

edible and their exclusive property whatever the size. This has led to many waters being closed to the public. We all have a responsibility to protect recreational angling for future generations, at the moment that means keeping records of weight of fish caught and looking after our waters. Providing the data gives those who represent us the tool to fight our case. At times it can seem like a fight.

### ***So - recreational angling quotas?***

Do I think recreational angling should have a quota? No. I see the issues involved with quota management and think not. If there was a quota for Bluefin tuna allowing say ten fish to be caught and sold by rod and reel would there be a rush to catch the first few of the season? And who would get it? I do believe that angling requirements must be considered and allowed for, but I don't think the amount of fish killed by anglers is large enough to impact seriously on commercial stocks. Angling contributes a lot more than simply a meal for dinner, but we do need to get the true data on what is taken each year, because nothing can be managed without the correct data.

Saying that, I tried to work out how many Mackerel I took last year and could not come up with a figure. All were eaten or used as bait for other fish, but none were sold. For 1000 anglers that could be four tonnes of fish so the numbers do add up. One commercial net



*Fresh Mackerel is delicious and is a good bait fish as well*

haul could be multiples of that. Our representatives need figures to properly state our case; the information is known by anglers and the industry should be taken more seriously by the scientists, although I see this happening more and more in recent times. Angle-shark are endangered and scarce, but anglers have caught them in many places not recognised or known areas by the experts. Commercial fishermen know places where fish are caught, even if they are meant to be extinct in that area and this information needs to be shared.

Footnote: Just finished a meeting where the European Anglers Alliance gave a presentation. EU is introducing new control regulations and recreational angling will be affected, no-one is certain exactly what the details will be. Registration of anglers is very possible as a mandatory measure.



*Spur-dog at €6 a box*



# 2023 GREAT GAME FAIR TERRIER & LURCHER CHAMPIONSHIPS TOOK PLACE AT TWO VENUES

*The Irish Working Terrier Federation (report Albert Titterington) and at the McGrath Racing & Show Day (report Margaret McStay)*



*The IWTF team*

Appreciating the fact that terrier, whippet and lurcher enthusiasts prepare, train and even breed dogs for the Five Nations Championships, and the Master McGrath and Mick the Miller races, the Great Game Fairs of Ireland team sponsored these championships at other events.

The RED MILLS Terrier and Lurcher Championships and the FEEDWELL Whippet Championships were staged at the Irish Working Terrier Federation Show staged at Slane and sponsored by FEEDWELL. And the RED MILLS Master McGrath and FEEDWELL Mick the Miller races plus the GGF of I All Ireland Racing & Show Championships were staged in Carlow by the McGrath Racing team.

Kieran Young was the main organiser of the IWTF show and after the torrential rain we experienced on the second day of the 2022 Game Fair I could sympathise with him and the rest of the team to see their obviously impressive arrangements threatened by similarly heavy and persistent rain throughout the day. Photography in such

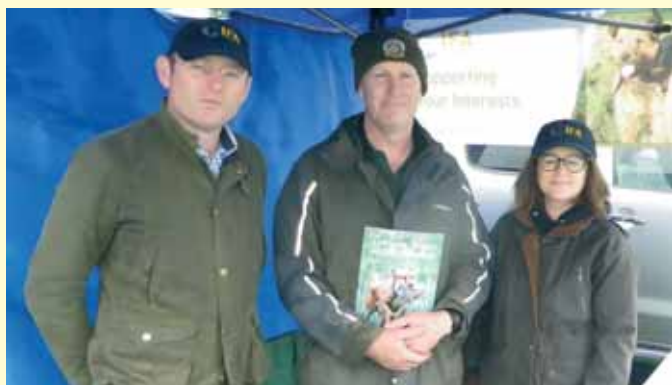


*The Digging Championships attracted great interest – the ultimate winners look quietly confident*



*The Digging competition Presentations*





*The team from IFA Countryside were there – here IWTF Sec Owen Mulcahy –shares a copy of Ireland's most read country sports magazine with them.*

weather is difficult but a selection of photographs will hopefully give a good idea of the atmosphere on the day.

However there was a good turnout and while sprits may have been dampened slightly the show went ahead and I think

the rain may have helped soften the ground for the Digging Championships!

I was honoured to receive the Colette Gannon Memorial Trophy for Sportsmanship and accepted with thanks on behalf of Irene ( who does so much of our pro country sports work) and myself. It brought back many happy memories of the Mourne Show hosted by Colette and Kieran.

We also attended the McGrath's Racing and Show Day held in Carlow. It also was initially threatened by rain but eventually the weather turned and the large crowd was able to take advantage of the superb organisation on a most impressive and huge site. Margaret and John McStay were present and Margaret's report of the day follows.

I would like to than Kieran Young and Michael McGrath for facilitating these championships, Kieran for the Colette Gannon Award and Michael for the presentation to me of an engraved watch.



*Red Mills Five Nations Ch & Res Ch Lurcher*



*Red Mills Five Nations Ch & Res Ch Terrier*



*Feedwell Five Nations Ch & Res Ch Whippet*



*Best in Show IWTF*



*A young champion!*



# Obituary

## Seamus Erwin

**W**e were sorry to hear of the death of Seamus Erwin – one of the last of the great terrier men of similar status to legends like Gary Middleton and Brian Plummer, but much more than that as an accomplished angler, wildfowler, game shot, game keeper and naturalist.

Seamus lived a very full life and one that most people would dream of - as a true 'full-time' countryman. One could write a book about him! Seamus was best known as a 'terrier man' having won the prestigious 'Stoneleigh Championship' and when there was a bounty on foxes, and pelts were valuable to furriers, Seamus left his job as a lab technician in Michelin to become a 'full time' fox hunter. He travelled both North and South shooting and digging foxes for what even now would be regarded as 'exceptional wages'.

In the early 80's, with Matt Lee he took over running the Terrier & Lurcher Show at the Game Fair - he also helped in other capacities. In the late 80's when he was helping me at the Fair at Slane, we were having a drink with some of the boys in the Conyngham Arms, when discussions took place about how to make terrier & lurcher showing as popular to the public as shooting, fishing & gundogs. And the concept of an All Ireland Championship was born - initially I sponsored this through the magazine but ultimately it came to the Game Fair and helped popularise working dog shows throughout Ireland. Forty years later the All Ireland Racing & Showing Championships are still going strong and there are terrier and lurcher shows staged virtually every weekend throughout the Summer season.

However, Seamus's interests in country sports and the countryside were much wider than terrier and lurchers - his knowledge of wildlife was phenomenal and he was an excellent angler, gundog trainer & handler, picking up at Shanes Castle, gamekeeper, ferreter, and shot. He kept three different grey partridge shoots for me in the Glens of Antrim and used his experience to help set up at least two others.

He was also a conservationist who with his good friend Terence Regan was instrumental in the Three Islands Gun Club, at Toome winning a national conservation award. His knowledge of the lough was exceptional and he had great pride in the Three Island Duck Shoot. I had the pleasure of shooting with him there on several occasions and it was a magical place with unbelievable bird life of all kinds. With him shooting regularly on the lough it was impressive to see his exceptional standard of gundog handling with his Chesapeake and Labradors – very few shot duck were not retrieved.

I also had the pleasure of shooting pheasants, rabbits, pigeon and grouse with him in NI, and wild grey partridge, pigeon and wildfowl in Scotland. A great story teller he was excellent company and shooting with him was always very entertaining and I look back with pleasure on time spent in his company.

In all that he did he was supported by his loyal wife Betty who kept a beautiful house and was generous in her hospitality. Our condolences go to Betty and his family.

Editors Note: Many years ago I saw at first hand the real art of a countryman for that was what he was as Albert noted above. Mid evening on a Friday in November the call came from Seamus 'you've never been foxing have you?' I hadn't but I was about to find out. In the early hours we met and travelled in his wee van to a local piece of rough country not a million miles away. We were to do a bit of 'bushing,' with what Plummer called a 'bobbery pack'. I forget what the dogs were but we had three or four of mixed variety. The land had been hit badly by a marauding fox or foxes with chickens suffering predation at night and Seamus had answered the farmer's call for help.

We walked towards a scrub covered hill but at its foot was a quaking bog which appeared impenetrable to me. Seamus chuckled at my reluctance to cross. "We'll let the badgers show us the road" he said and without pausing he followed a path that only he could make out. At the top he



*At home on the lough Seamus with his dogs returning from shooting.*

placed me with gun. "Don't bother looking anywhere but at those two bushes at the left." I did what I was told while Seamus made his way circuitously to the foot of the hill and his dogs began to hunt up towards me, a bell on one dog's collar tinkling.

It took all of 20 minutes to work the scrub when suddenly just as predicted a large dog fox broke cover at the spot I had been told to watch. Bang! One chicken killer less to worry about and a carton of eggs on the bonnet when we went back to the farm.

I enjoyed Seamus' company many times shooting but that was my only time out foxing. It was an expedition that showed his unique knowledge of the countryside. I was privileged to be at Seamus and Betty's wedding anniversary in Ballymena one time, where all the food had been sourced by Seamus. In typical Seamus manner the dishes were labelled as crocodile, elephant and even dodo, the truth being they comprised wonderful wild food gathered by the wee man himself and were delicious.

I have no doubt he is up there right now, getting permissions sorted for a wee bit of 'letting nature provide' as he used to call hunting, shooting and fishing. A unique character and somebody I was proud to call a friend. My condolences to Betty and the family.

# THE McGRATH LURCHER RACING CLUB DOG SHOW & RACE DAY, SUNDAY 27 AUGUST

*Report by Margaret McStay*

The town of Carlow was founded by the Normans in 1207, making it one of the oldest counties in Ireland. Nestled in the middle of this beautiful ancient County lies the traditionally rural village of Ballinabrannagh with its very convenient proximity to the M9 motorway. This was the venue for The Mc Grath Lurcher Racing Club Dog Show and Race Day Sunday 27 August.

As the strawberry alarm clock rang out loud and clear at 5.30am, with the dawn chorus from the dog pens chiming in our ears, flasks and sandwiches packed into the boot, very soon we were on our way down the motorway to Co Carlow arriving at our destination at approximately 11.00am.

As we approached the venue, it was very evident the popularity of this show with a large crowd already in the field. All the usual show goers of yesteryear were there and also a few new trainees. The weather was pretty good all day with the exception of a few light showers.

The show rings and racetrack was in immaculate condition despite the inclement weather of the previous days. The racetrack especially was mowed razor tight to the ground and as flat as a



*Winner of the Master McGrath Michael McGrath with Calypso & Reserve Jan Sen with Whippy*

pancake. In my opinion one of the best prepared racetracks I have seen this summer.

This was all down to the excellent workmanship of Michael and Jack Mc Grath. These two men put their heart and soul into this show ground to make it comfortable for all the good Country Sportsmen and women of the Canine world, and that they did in abundance.

The entire McGrath family was out in strength on Sunday, with my favourite, Mammy McGrath in the middle of them. I have great admiration for this lady, who reared her 15 children in hard times, and all have grown up to be good citizens, and all have given her back so much unconditional love.

With no Game Fair this year, Albert J. Titterington asked the Mc Grath Lurcher Racing Club to organise and run the Red Mills Master Mc Grath, the Feedwell Mick The Miller, and the 42nd All Ireland Championship show and Racing classes. And this they did with meticulous planning, and what a success that was.

Niall O Cloghan was there with his now ever popular Terrier Maze. The Maze always brings all our huntsmen together in competition and to show off their prized winning Terriers.

The raffle as usual always generates



*A superbly laid out rings and racetrack*



a buzz of excitement at our shows and Sundays raffle was no different. Some lovely prizes up for grabs on the day.

It was nice to see all our little boys and girls in the childrens handling class showing off their faithful Canine breeds in the show ring and also on the

racetrack. These little people are our Country Sportsmen and women and show organisers of tomorrow. Some proud mothers and fathers watching their little ones walk round the ring and receive their goodie bags. I am sure there were some sleepy heads on Sunday night.



*Mick the Miller winner Errol Gardiner with Chase & Michael with Chance along with Margaret McStay*



*Overall Champion and Best in Show Niall OCloghan with Nan*



*The entire McGrath Family with the Master McGrath winner*



## Results

### RED MILLS Master McGrath Winner

Michael McGrath with Calypso

Reserve Jan Sen with Whippy

### FEEDWELL Mick the Miller

Errol Gardiner with Chase

Reserve Michael McGrath with Chance

### All Ireland Racing

Whippets Leigh Thompson with Harley,

Reserve Suzanne Addis with Poppy

Under 21s Willy with Blacky

Reserve Lynzi Gardiner Mc Gill with River

Under 22s Kirsty Harpur with Dash,

Reserve Rose Mc Coy with Texas

Under 23s Non Elite Traditional

Lurcher MJ with Ruby, Reserve Matthew with Leela

Under 23s Elite Lynzi Gardiner Mc Gill

with Brier, Reserve Vanessa Lynn with

Arthur

Under 24s Lynzi Gardiner Mc Gill with

Jack, Reserve Colin Tucker with Fletcher

Under 24 Hairy Eddie Kane with Seldom,

Reserve Adam with Ginger

Bull Cross Heavy Fran with

Precious Reserve Joyce Scott with Mable

Bull Cross Light Joyce Scott with Axel,

Reserve Leigh Thompson with Roxy

Big Dogs Elite Paul with Miley,

Reserve Fran with Rose

### Master McGrath Qualifier 2024

Josh with Ben Reserve, Rose Mc Coy with

Aria

Greyhounds Jan Sen with Jet, Reserve Ella Thompson with Zena

Bocky Dempsey Memorial Cup Liam with Wexford, Reserve Yapper Hayes

### All Ireland Showing Results

Whippet Puppy Vanessa Lynn Louis

Whippet Dog Billy Kerry with Kerry

Connolly Franks Blue Boy

Whippet Bitch Karla Wilson with Bow

Working Whippet Darren with Blue

Racing Whippet Suzanne Addis with Poppy

Veteran Whippet Suzanne Addis with

Beauty

Whippet Pairs Billy Kerry with Kerry

Connolly Franks Blueboy and Kerry

Connolly Sapphire

Overall Champion Whippet Billy Kerry with

Kerry Connolly Franks Blueboy Reserve

Suzanne Addis with Poppy

Overall Champion Terrier Niall O Cloghan

with Nan

Strong Dogs Pups Andrew with Sonny

Staff Bitch Kirsty Smyth with Ruby

Staff Dog Corey Beggs with Paco

Pitt Dog Kyle with Badger

English Bull Karla Wilson Clive

Overall Champion Strong Dog Corey Beggs

with Paco

Reserve Karla Wilson with Clive

Bully's Pups u6Months Diesel

Pups o6Months Alan Frenchie

Karla Wilson Pocket Poppy

XLBill Mc Donagh with Apollo

Merle XL Stacey

Olde English Ashton Sands with Pandora

British Bull Karla Wilson with Rita

Overall Champion Bully Bill Mc Donagh with Apollo

Reserve Ashton Sands with Pandora

Lurchers Pups Josh with Hanna Ace

Smooth u23 Conor Beck with Smile

Smooth o23 Paul Obrian with Cora

Rough u23 Ned Kane with Seldom

Rough o23 Adam Mathew's with Boss

Bull x Dog David with Blue

Bull x Bitch Josh Hanna with Queenie

Non Ped Vanessa Lynn with Arthur

Collie x Rose Mc Coy with Aria

Working Billy Kerry With Axel

Lamping Faye with Cerburus

Pairs Adam with Bow and Holly

Overall Champion Lurcher Adam Mathews

with Bow

Reserve Billy Kerry with Axel

Overall Champion and Best in Show Niall O

Cloghan with Nan

Reserve Corey Beggs with Paco

Overall Puppy Champion Vanessa Lynn

with Arthur

Reserve Cathal O Cloghan with Max

**Racing and Showing Results courtesy of**

**Biddy McGrath**

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# Some Top Dogs of the Season

Photos From Margaret McStay



*Brendan Coleman's Show Overall winners with Judge Albert Titterington, Gerard Toman & Pauric Charley*



*Glenshane Show Overall Champion and Best in Show Susanne Addis with Jax Reserve Vanessa Lynn with Arthur*



*West Wexford Show Overall Champion & Best in Show Jed Donagh with Reserve Kevin and Kildare's Danger (hound)*



*Tally Ho Show Overall Champion & Best in Show Paula & Corey Beggs with Paco, Reserve Lisa Beggs with Ria*



*Keep 'er Lit Show Overall Champion & Best in Show Paula Beggs with Paco alongside Judge Barry Holland*



*DWTC Show Overall Champion & Best in Show Suzanne Addis with Jax*



*Irish Association of Working Dog Shows Overall Champion & Best in Show Chris McCourt with Rocco*



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- ✓ Lower protein 18%.
- ✓ Natural omega 3 and 6 oils for a shiny and healthy coat.
- ✓ Satisfaction guaranteed.



# Review of Summer and Autumn Trials 2023 for Setters and Pointers in Ireland

*Dogs for the second day of the Irish championship*

*(photo credit. R. Monroe)*

The two-day prestigious Irish Red Setter Club stakes on grouse have always opened the field trial season at least as long as the early years of the 1900s. For those not familiar with pointer and setter trials, the spring season commences on the first weekend in February and ends on the last weekend March. The period between March and August are the dogs and their owners' holidays. Allowing the breeding season for birds, though many field trial people make their annual pilgrimage to Scotland or England in July for the grouse counts.

Some field triallers go to Scotland or England twice a year, at the end of March for the pair counts and to the same estates in mid-to-late July for the brood counts. The Scottish estates, havens for wildlife of every type are now under sustained pressure with more regulations, and this year licensing laws came into force which has caused enormous angst and caused some estates to be sold. Glen Prosen is a case in point, with the loss of jobs for all its

keepers and shepherds and although one of the last strongholds for black grouse is set to be planted with non-indigenous, monoculture forests. For myself, this year I limited myself to one trial a weekend, so apologies in advance if I made errors in some of the results.

The first bank holiday weekend the

Irish Red Setter and the English Setter Club open stakes were all cancelled, possibly due to many grouse estates counting later than usual this year with the wet weather in July.

While my wife and I were enjoying grouse shooting in the Highlands, as a wedding present I may add, with our



*Aiden Dunne (judge), Joe O'Sullivan and winner Gardenfield Jarvey Girl, Jim Sheridan (Club President), Des Linton and Craigrua Nevin and Raymond Monroe (judge and Hon. Secretary)*



dogs, the trial season began in earnest with the Irish pointer club confined stake in the Dublin mountains. A third round was run by judges Raymond Monroe (Granaghburn) and Billy Grace (Capparoo) and to reward their efforts, the excellent liver and white Pointer of Dr. Stephen Clarke's Gannochy Milo produced a pack of grouse resulting in a first excellent award. The following day, the always well supported Irish red and white stake was held in Glencree, county Wicklow judged by the experienced Aiden Dunne (Maodhóg) and Raymond Monroe. Glencree always delivers a good supply of game, and the judges could make two awards. First with excellent was Joe O'Sullivan's Irish Setter Gardenfield Jarvey Girl and second very good was awarded to Des Linton's Irish Red and White Setter dog Craigrua Nevin.

The 19th August, the Cill Dara annual summer field trial took place at Kippure with its new secretary, yours truly. There were birds, but sporadic however, again the judges Alan Bartley



*George Forbes with his English Setter Zico who has enjoyed a fantastic season*

*(photo credit: R. Monroe)*

and Billy Grace's perseverance paid off with one of the dogs in the extension to the second round producing a grouse. Dogs in the extension were George Forbes' Zico, my own Ballydavid Artemis, Heike Sporleder's Irish Setter Vilslev Nilsson and Raymond Monroe's Ballydavid An Dagda. George Forbes' English setter Zico obliged with a single grouse and received first with excellent. Second place with excellent went to Aiden Dunne's Irish Setter dog Maodhog Sceilig. The postponed Irish red setter club trial re-scheduled for the following day did not go ahead

The following weekend is the annual highlight of the calendar year being the 65th Irish grouse championship. There have been suggestions to run our most prestigious stake later in the year, when weather is cooler, and heather blossoms are not dusting upwards as the dogs run. This year the weather was cooler than its has been in quite a few years and while the wind was light at the start of the first day, it was just about sufficient overall. The meet was in Enniskerry, one of the prettiest villages in Wicklow and worth a visit for anyone that has not been there. This year several competitors arrived from Germany and Scandinavia as well as our more established visitors from England and Scotland.

The first few braces met with grief as grouse sat very tight in the murky conditions and dogs seemed unaware, they were there. However, the trial picked up hugely in standard and there were some very impressive performances befitting the calibre of the stake. The most stylish dog of the first day went to Aiden Dunne's Irish Setter Maodhog Sceilig. Eight brace of dogs were called back for the second day being Gerald Devine's English Setters Gortinreagh Orra and Gortinreagh Jack Duggan, Colin Forde's Irish Setter Foulksrath Lottie, Carol Calvert's English setter Gortinreagh Joker, Jon Kean's English Pointer Morness Archie, Heidi Norgaard Jensen's Irish Setter Norrsetter SA Bagherra, Hugh Brady's Irish Setters Ballydavid The Morrigan,

Malstabodarna Embla of Ballydavid and Ballydavid Nemesis, Heike Sporleder's Irish Setter Vilslev Nilsson, Joe O'Sullivan's English pointer Gardenfield Sue and Irish setter Gardenfield Jarvey Girl, Michael Houston's Pointer dog Ardclinis Francie Frank, Aiden Dunne's Irish Setter Maodhog Sceilig, Raymond Monroe's Irish Setter Ballydavid an Dagda, Laurent Hild's English Pointer Langwell Kerry of Morness (Richard MacNicol).

There's always a great tension the second day of the championship with the lucky ones called by the secretary after the meal held on the evening between. It was no different and with some dogs in a good position from the previous day, the stress levels on those with finds were double.

There really were some memorable performances and the usual unlucky stories for some but undoubtedly the weather and the propensity of game contributed to an excellent standard. In previous years, the championship stake had finished with a sole or few awards. Malstabodarna Embla of Ballydavid got an additional run after the second round to meet game, but to no avail and the sizeable gallery returned to the motors to devour lunches and await the results. The trophies for most stylish dog of day one was presented to Aiden Dunne and his Irish Setter Maodhog Sceilig while your scribe's Int. FTCh Malstabodarna Embla of Ballydavid received the 2022 Irish Kennel Club Dog of the year (her fourth), which is quite an achievement for her.

The winner of the 65th Irish Kennel Club Pointer and Setter Championship was my own FTCh Ballydavid The Morrigan of the Kingdom with second to Carol Calvert's English Setter Gortinreagh Joker and third to Joe O'Sullivan's Irish Setter Gardenfield Jarvey Girl and Certificate of Merits to Michael Houston's English Pointer Int. FTCh Ardclinis Francie Frank and Heike Sporleder's Irish Setter Vilslev Nilsson.

Back to the circuit with the Irish





*Judges for the 65th Irish Kennel Club championship were Bill Connolly, Anthony Mulhall and Billy Grace. (photo credit: R. Monroe)*

Pointer Club Trials in Kippure judged by Alan Bartley and Michael Houston of Strabane with the sole award going to George Forbes English setter Zico. This gives Zico his field trial champion title, subject to his show qualification.

The next day was the premier field trials judged by your scribe and Raymond Monroe in Kinnity on a very warm breathless day. In some ways given the conditions it was an easy trial to judge given that most dogs found the heavy terrain and heat a struggle, while the few made light work of it. Some

excellent dogs gave their best including George Forbes English Setter Zico, Gerald Devine's Lefanta Cara, Carol Calvert's Gortinreagh Joker but the two dogs in the awards were worthy of their excellent awards. Anthony Mulhall's Irish Setter Mountbay Dexter is a beautifully trained dog who rakes his ground evenly on both sides. On a level cast in the first round, he set a small covey on the brow of a hill, using the light breeze intelligently to pin the birds. In the second round, he did what he does and with pace and intensity was

faultless covering his ground. Sean Hogan's Ballydavid Nuada produced one of the best rounds I had seen in Kinnity. He covered difficult heavy ground effortlessly with a wide range, stopping dead to set while he hit the bottom of a hill. His set was full of intensity and quite extraordinarily a single grouse broke over one hundred yards away. Now, he had the difficult task of pinpointing the lie of the bird with virtually no breeze, and while we were expecting grouse in-between the dog and the single bird. Like a soldier marching with his battalion, and without hesitation, he moved to the exact point of the flush. In his second round he did not produce the consistent ground treatment of our eventual winner. Both dogs were obviously graded excellent.

The Irish Red and White Setter confined stake returned to Glencree under Lar Quinn (Bansha) and Billy Grace (Capparoo). Club president Jim Sheridan took home first with FTCh Craigrua Loki and second with FTCh Craigrua Devin.

On Saturday 23rd September the premier returned to Kinnity and the winner was Billy Grace's English Setter Capparoo Jao. Second place was Raymond O'Dwyer's Irish Setter Sheantullagh Rip and third Liam Law's English Setter Knocksmall Tucker.

On the same day the Ulster Gundog League held the first of the Northern Irish circuit trials, on this occasion in Glarryford with judges Davy O'Neill (Shanrycon) and Padraig McMahon. A big entry and lots of game was encountered. Another warm day, this moor is challenging at the best of times. The winner was announced as my own Int. FTCh Malstabodarna Embla of Ballydavid and second to Ballydavid Artemis.

The following day the Strabane and District went to the keepered moors of Glenwherry where many memorable trials have been held. I was not there, but I believe conditions were challenging. The winner was Carol Calvert's English Setter Gortinreagh



*Winner of premier field trial summer stake in Kinnity was Anthony Mulhall's Mountbay Dexter and second was Sean Hogan's Ballydavid Nuada with judges Hugh Brady and Raymond Monroe (photo credit: R. Monroe)*





*Billy Grace's Capparoe Jao achieved his FTCh title and is having a superb year  
(photo credit: B. Grace)*



*Hugh Brady with Embla & Artemis*

Josey Wales with grouse with Dr. Stephen Clarke's Gordon Setter dog Carnockmoor Serin in second with snipe.

The Irish Pointer Club open stake of 29th September and the English setter confined on 30th September ran tillage trials and while birds were plentiful - there were no awards. However, on Sunday 2nd October the English setter open stake was won by Billy Grace's English Setter FTCh Capparoe Jao.

On the same weekend, the historical Ulster Irish red setter club trials returned to their ancestral home of Murley by kind permission of the

Hamilton Stubber family. Judges for the day were Bob Whitworth and Carol Calvert. Again, game was plentiful over both rounds and five brace were returned for a second round. The awards were first to Gerald Devine's Int FTCh Ballyellen Tango, second to my own FTCh Ballydavid Nemesis, third and fourth to Gerald Devine's English Setters Gortinreagh Rose and Gortinreagh Jack Duggan and CM to Bill Connolly's Irish Setter Ballyellen April.

The following day the same club and same location, held another open stake judged by Gerald Devine (Gortinreagh)

and Dr. Stephen Clarke (Glendrissock). Again, game was very plentiful and personally after having five dogs returned to the second round of 4 ½ brace, one by one my dogs made terminal errors! Pressure can do strange things.

After another high-quality stake, the results were announced as Joan McGillicuddy's Int. FTCh Ballydavid Starjet who came out of retirement, due to the continual succession of heats and their dastardly after effects of other dogs. She must be our greatest of all time, this being her 31st open stake win including the Irish Championship on grouse consistently over eleven years. She has whelped two litters, the first producing two Championship winners and a winning dog on the continent. Her second litter produced first and second in the Derby last year. Second was my own Int FTCh Malstabodarna Embla of Ballydavid and third to Starjet's son, Raymond Monroe's Ballydavid The Dagda.

The Northern Ireland Pointer Club 75th anniversary trials was held on the 7th and 8th October in Glarryford and Glenwherry. I remember the 50th anniversary being talked about and it was great seeing the pictures of those events on social media. A superb entry befitting the occasion with support of competitors from England and Scotland added to the excitement of the occasion. It was a privilege to see these dogs in the flesh that that you have heard about. Judges for the day were Colin Adamson and John Murray. Game was abundant which sometimes was great and sometimes not so great! After a very exciting trial with loads of action I estimated around thirteen dogs were in consideration for awards.

This is the only time I ever had five dogs available for consideration at the end of a trial. It was probably my most memorable day, as my own Ballydavid Nemesis, Ballydavid The Morrigan and Ballydavid Starjet of the Kingdom were awarded first, second and third. Davy O'Neill's Irish setter Shanrycon Casey was fourth with certificate of merits to





*Hugh Brady with Nemesis, Starjet, The Morrigan and Embla with judges Colin Adamson and John Murray at NIPC 75th anniversary trials*  
(photo credit: N. O'Dowd)

Gerald Devine's Int FTCh Ballyellen Tango, Gortinreagh Quiz, Joe O'Sullivan's Gardenfield Jarvey Girl, Raymond Monroe's Irish red and white setter Granaghburn Nebrasksa and my own Int FTCh Malstabodarna Embla of Ballydavid.

A 75th anniversary meal was held that evening and I have never been as sad to go home after this trial. The joys of family life. The next day in Glenwherry with judges Colin Adamson and Dr. Stephen Clarke, Terry Harris was awarded first place on grouse with Sparkfield Moonlight and Carol Calvert's Gortinreagh Joker was second. This turned out to be the end of the successful Ulster circuit for 2023.

The following weekend the circuit moved to the quaint village of Monivea established by the Ffrench family. A beautiful morning greeted the competitors and, due to the wet late summer locals laboured removing turf from the bog. Five braces of dogs were called to the second round, and two notable dogs were lost, being Bill Connolly's electric Irish Setter Ballyellen April and Joe O'Sullivan's

exciting Irish Setter Gardenfield Jarvey Girl, who both gave stunning displays in the first round. Judges Alan Bartley (Ballinahemmy) and Billy Grace (Capparoo) announced Pat Reape's Irish Setter Lisdovoge Jasper as the winner with my own Int FTCh Ballydavid Gaelforce in second and Aiden Dunne's Irish setter Maodhog Sceilig in third. All

dogs were graded excellent.

The following day, the English Setter confined stake had an entry of twenty-one dogs and game was available but difficult this time of year. Judges were Alan Bartley and Raymond Monroe. Billy Grace was announced the winner, this time with Upperwood Resolution of Capparoo with second place to Eoghan Marshall's Lisadobber Millie.

Unfortunately, the Irish Derby planned for Saturday 21st October 2023 was cancelled due to lack of entries. This stake is run for puppies under two years old and sadly they are eligible just once. In its stead, the Irish Red Setter Club ran its open stake in Kilchreest under judges Raymond O'Dwyer (Sheantullagh) and Aiden Dunne (Maodhóg). Fifteen dogs went to post and there was a full suite of awards. First was Billy Grace's FTCh Capparoo Jao on grouse, with second to Joe O'Sullivan's Irish Setter Gardenfield Jarvey Girl and third to Bill Connolly's Ballyellen Borris and reserve to Pat Reaper's Lisdovoge Jasper. The following day, the Irish Red and White Setter Confined Trial at Killakee under judges Bill Connolly and Davy O'Neill produced a sole award, being Anthony Healy's dog Craigrua Ualtar. Anthony is not long in the sport so warmest congratulations on his first win.



*Terry Harris with his new GB FTCh Sparkfield Moonlight and Carol Calvert with Gortinreagh Joker and head keeper of Glenwherry, Merlin Becker at NIPC 75th anniversary trials*  
(photo credit: R. Monroe)





# engage

PREMIUM COUNTRY DOG FOOD



### Bill Connolly

Bill Connolly of Ballyellen Kennels with Ballyellen April who had her first win on the 31<sup>st</sup> of July at the Pointer Club of Scotland summer trails in Cawdor.



### Hugh Brady

Hugh Brady of Ballydavid Kennels with FTCh, Snipe Ch Ballydavid The Morrigan (Irish Grouse championship winner), Int FTCh Ballydavid Nemesis (Irish Derby winner), and Ch. Sh. Ch Forfarian Red or Dead at Ballydavid (winner green star at Irish red setter championship show), all fed on Red Mills food!



### Gerald Devine

Gerald Devine with his new Field Trial Champion ESB Gortinreagh Orra who won the Northern Counties Pointer and Setter Society's Open Stake at Moy Estate, Scotland in August gaining her FTCh title. The event was sponsored by Connolly's Red Mills.

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# Charles Cotton's Fishing Temple

*Cotton's Fishing Temple on the River Dove*

I am sitting in the cool writing this, on the hottest day of the year, at the round table at the very centre of Charles Cotton's Fishing Temple. The oak doors are open. Outside we are on the cusp of autumn, that moment when leaves start to turn from pliant green to brittle brown. The fall is still someway off but, despite the unseasonal heat, you can sense change in the air.

A blackbird is my sole company his melodic, whistling call percolating into the stone room. For the most part he observes me from a nearby bush but, every so often, he alights to the triple tier of the entrance steps to get a better look at me, cocking his head sideways, to pretend with some birdlike deceit that he is not looking at me. We both know he is.

I would also like to pretend that my moment was an exact facsimile of when Charles Cotton and Izaak Walton both communed in this very building, built in

1674 by Cotton, a large and wealthy owner in these parts of Derbyshire, to celebrate their combined love of fishing.

By this time *The Compleat Angler*, originally published in 1653, was already into its fifth edition, with



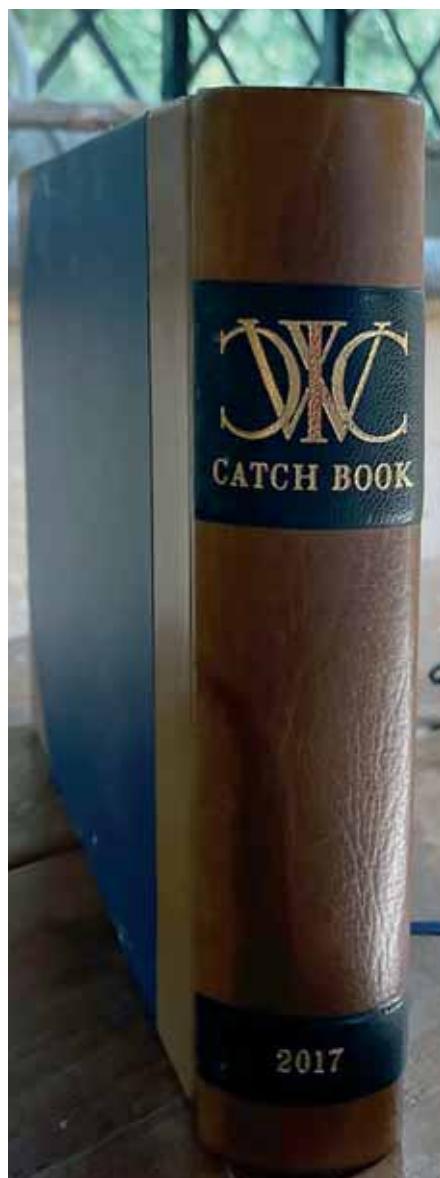
*Walton & Cotton*



the original thirteen chapters expanded to twenty one with Cotton adding the fly fishing sections. It would go on to be the second most reprinted book of all time behind the St James Bible.

Unfortunately, 21st century intrusions make it hard to exactly replicate the days of our angling forebears as, at 90 second intervals, at twenty five thousand feet the engines of huge aircraft bound for North America scream as they execute a sharp and rising turn to the west. I stand up to close doors, the heavy, cast iron hinges swinging the thick wood into the stone frame with satisfying precision. The blackbird gives me a dirty look as I do so but the closure does the job; as I return to the table three and a half centuries of silence envelop me.

‘Study to be quiet’. So wrote Walton



*Temple Catch Record Book*

so I did just that within the four walls, each as thick as your arm is long. The Temple is a perfectly square building. Not huge at maybe fifteen feet in each direction covered by a steep, four sided roof which is ‘tiled’ with slates hewn from the local limestone rock topped by a fish weathervane on a square pillar with a sundial on each face etched with the intertwined CWC initials of Cotton. Inside it is surprisingly bright and airy, with the rafters exposed to the full extent of the tall ceiling and similarly tall stone mullioned lead light windows in every wall. The floor is worn by age and use, but the square stones still sit in the regular fashion as dressed by those masons so many centuries ago. In one corner sits an open fireplace, spilling out ash with a surround, again stone, that sports the CWC motif in each corner.

Are we exaggerating in calling this a Temple? I think not. It is a temple to our sport that has survived wars, plagues and insurrections. As Tennyson wrote of streams, men may come and men may go but I go on forever. Such is our pursuit of fish. I hope sometime in the late 24th century, another three and a half centuries on from now, an equally daft but dedicated cohort such as our own will still sit in wonder at Cotton’s Fishing Temple.

### ***An unlikely place for a chalkstream***

My visit to the Temple was part of a triangular road trip to the outermost reaches of the Fishing Breaks empire which started in the Yorkshire Wolds at Driffeld Beck.

The flat, farming landscape, more akin to the fens than the southern chalkstream landscape always strikes me as an unlikely place for a river as lovely as the Driffeld Beck which you can make sound even less appealing by pointing out that it is a tributary of the River Hull, eventually spilling into the Humber Estuary.

But north-east English caricatures aside, if you did not know any better you could easily mistake it for

Hampshire’s best – clear, fast and with a verdant growth of the all-important ranunculus in quantities I have rarely seen anywhere else in recent years. As I looked at it with owner/farmer Andrew Dixon, the second generation custodian, I could not put my finger on what was wrong. It was only after we had walked almost all the river that I twigged what was missing: the wretched blanket weed which is an unwanted feature of most rivers by late summer, that straggly, filamentous weed that thrives when flows reduce and the phosphate count shoots up.

Of course, there is a downside to all this good weed – it needs to be cut. Andrew, ever the resourceful Yorkshire farmer, has eschewed one of our fancy southern weed boats for his own dingy, battery powered contraption. He tells me it is his favourite thing for a summer 4am start to whirr up and down the river, with a flask of coffee, taking in the dawn until the batteries run out and the farming day kicks in.

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# PURDEY PIECES



*The Founder's Mallet & Chisel*

The esteemed name of Purdey conjures up the very epitome of sporting guns and they have released a new archival series of articles and photographs to mark their heritage under the title Purdey Pieces. The first examines the actual mallet and chisel which was used by their founder James Purdey.

The Founder's Mallet & Chisel which take pride of place in the celebrated Long Room at Purdey's Mayfair headquarters, are among the company's most coveted possessions. These battered tools, heavily patinated and carrying the dents and scars of rigorous use, are the very objects used by James Purdey around the time that he founded his eponymous gun making company in London's Princes Street back in 1814.

The mallet and chisel tell a story not just of a business, but also of the man

behind it. The premature death of his father meant Purdey was apprenticed to his own brother-in-law, Thomas Keck Hutchinson. Hutchinson was a stocker based in Southwark, south London – meaning that was the first craft of gunmaking that Purdey mastered.

In all likelihood, Purdey used this very mallet and chisel to rough-out the basic shape of the stocks for his first guns and, in so doing, established the famous 'Purdey stock', which remains one of the features that sets a Purdey gun apart from all others.

Combining a traditional, drum-shaped head with a handle of around five inches in length, the upper lip of each end is worn away more than the bottom – evidence that Purdey favoured this part of the tool to make the thousands of well-aimed strikes at its counterpart chisel. Likely made from boxwood, the mallet's handle was likely

ebonised along its length, but hours spent in the master craftsman's hold have worn through the coating to reveal ochre-coloured patches of the natural wood that show exactly where his fingers and thumb would have gripped it.

The chisel, meanwhile, bears even greater testament to many hours of hard work. Its inch-and-a-half wide blade is not designed for finessing, but for chipping-out the basic, initial form of the stocks from solid blanks of wood. The tapered top of the blade is rammed into the wooden handle and secured at the base by a simple, white metal collar. But, while the middle portion of the handle is smooth and burnished from being encircled by Purdey's hand, the top is anything but. Split and mushroomed into a flattened dome shape, it has clearly suffered thousands of blows.





# ‘Scraping the Barrel Book’

*History in the making - the famous Rigby Ledgers*

A new gun comes into your collection. You are excited, intrigued to discover how old it is, for whom it was made and perhaps even who made it. For many an owner, the quest to uncover the layers of historical information about an old gun often begins with hope and ends in disappointment.

The sad fact is that gunmakers of the past, like many businesses, often started and ended within the lifetime of the founder, others may have lasted two or three generations. When these businesses closed, more often than not the records, ledgers, accounts and ephemera ended-up in the dump.

Gunmakers that ceased to trade were sometimes taken over by a rival, who may or may not have archived the records. There are other ways of finding out facts about your gun, of course. Proof marks will help date it, as will the address on the rib, especially if the firm moved regularly, which many did. However, there is nothing as satisfying as finding primary evidence about it in the records of the maker. For

that you need the original day books.

Owners of Rigby guns and rifles are more fortunate than most. The company has been in, (essentially uninterrupted), business since its founding and there are various books and journals still in existence dating back to the 1790s. Each contains important and fascinating data about the company, its guns and customers.

## ***The Barrel Book sheds light on many details which were formerly lost to history***

Notable among the dusty tomes stacked on the shelves at John Rigby & Co's London headquarters, one book stands alone as an intriguing relic of a production process which must have been common to many, if not most of the British gunmakers of the day. It is the only one of its kind and it sheds light on many details that were lost to history, before we began researching the contents.

Labelled simply 'Barrel Book,' its first entry, in beautiful hand-penned black ink, is dated 1886 and it provides

a record of several facets of the barrel making process. As any gunmaker will tell you, the barrels are the heart of any gun and the first part to be made.

Then, as now, gunmakers were reliant on several other specialist trades, each of which supplied particular materials, goods or services that were not available in the gunmaker's workshop.

The Barrel Book first tells us the serial number the barrels were allocated (this is not the same as the serial number of the gun or rifle) and the date on which they were delivered, ready for actioning. This barrel number is usually retained (on the loop) and can be looked-up in the Barrel Book, just as we can look-up the serial number in the book that holds those.

We are told the length of the barrels and whether they are rifle or shotgun barrels, steel or Damascus and who the supplier of the tubes was.

Shotgun barrel entries denote chokes, jointing, bore-size and bore dimensions at various lengths, as well as weight.

The first barrel number is No.2000, entered in 1886.





*The Barrel Book*

### ***A picture of trade practises over time***

Some key dates within the book deserve attention, these provide us with a picture of trade practises in the late Victorian, early Edwardian period, which was one of major transition. Gun barrel makers were increasingly replacing hand-forged Damascus and twist barrel tubes with those made by the industrial, fluid-pressed steel method pioneered by Sir Joseph Whitworth. John Rigby was an early convert to the new material and, by 1886, utilised steel tubes in preference to Damascus, especially for the making of rifle barrels.

We can also track the fortunes of the barrel tube makers as time goes by, with favoured suppliers changing over time. Early steel tubes were provided by Annen Steel Co., H.B. Co., Smith, Siemens, and Webley. Damascus was supplied by Francotte and H&L Cie, (both of these were Belgian firms).

One such notable date is the one on which Whitworth steel was first used by Rigby. This was in April 1887 (it was for 'fitting-in' new barrels to Greener gun No.20763). These were 12-bore barrels of 30", weighing 3lbs 4oz and filed by 'J.Wheeler'.

Damascus barrels continued to be made in increasingly smaller numbers until 1906, when the last pair of Damascus barrels (Crolle supplied by H&L Cie) were fitted to a 12-bore shotgun. These were also filed by Wheeler, who must have been one of Rigby's in-house barrel filers.

The names of tube suppliers change as the century progresses; the Henry Barrel Co. makes an appearance in 1899, followed by Krupp, Webley & Scott and P. Webley. In fact, P. Webley dominates the book until 1921 and thereafter Webley & Scott and Krupp take over.

By 1926, the dominant names are Lane, Vickers, and Webley but after 1927, only Vickers features as a barrel tube supplier.

So, we can see how Rigby was an early champion of steel barrels, we also see that some customers still wanted Damascus, despite the gunmaker's preference for steel.

Damascus, when used, was Belgian supplied, which is not surprising as the

barrel tube suppliers of the Midlands were struggling to make top quality tubes by the 1880s. Among other London gunmakers, we know Purdey was an advocate of steel barrels at this time, as was James Woodward.

By 1932, when the Barrel Book ends, Damascus had disappeared to all intents and purposes, replaced by steel entirely for new guns and rifles.

The Barrel Book is just one of those in Rigby's archive. The other books extant include Accounts Ledgers, which vary in detail from simply recording 'To Goods' with amounts paid, to some quite revealing remittances to gun trade suppliers (like Philipson & Nephew) and craftsmen (like Thomas Bissell, who patented the 'Vertical Bolt' with John Rigby).

There are also Day Books, which record daily transactions in the shop. These can be mundane, like sales of 'wadding' or guns taken in for storage or repair, or detailed orders taken for new guns and rifles, including the name of the customer and the serial number of the gun.

### ***A fascinating way to unearth the smallest detail***

Finally, the Serial Number Books list, in order, guns and rifles sold. By cross-referencing the dates and serial



*Each barrel, or pair of barrels, is meticulously recorded in the columns across the two pages*



numbers, it is often possible to trace a serial number (through the Day Book) to the date it was ordered, by whom it was ordered and other details recorded when the order was placed.

The barrel book adds the source of the tubes, the barrel fitter, the original weight and length of the barrels and their dimensions, as measured at regular points throughout their length.

Unfortunately, if a gun was made before 1886 and after 1936, these barrel details will not be available.

We hope to discover more interesting information about the gun trade from Rigby's books. They are incomplete, but span the period from 1798 to the present day, covering both Rigby's origins in Dublin and later activity (post 1865) in London.

The pages of these record books are littered with famous names and dates. With some historical cross-referencing, we can often determine what individuals were planning when they approached their gunmaker to kit them out for an expedition and we can trace their escapades and what they likely did with their Rigbys while abroad.

The exploration of the Barrel Book is just part of the process Rigby is



undertaking to fully examine and understand the historical significance of the pen and ink legacy of knowledge that past members of the Rigby firm have left to us.

Anybody with a Rigby gun or rifle can approach the company for a search of the records. The detail available will vary from one period to another but with careful cross-referencing, it is often possible to uncover a number of fascinating details about a customer's Rigby.

For more information, visit: [www.johnrigbyandco.com](http://www.johnrigbyandco.com).

*Historic Rising Bite and modern Big Game on ledgers in Rigby showroom*

*The Barrel Book stops in 1936. This 12-bore is the last gun with details recorded within its pages*

