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# Rural Pursuits

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Judges and award winners at Heinsberg

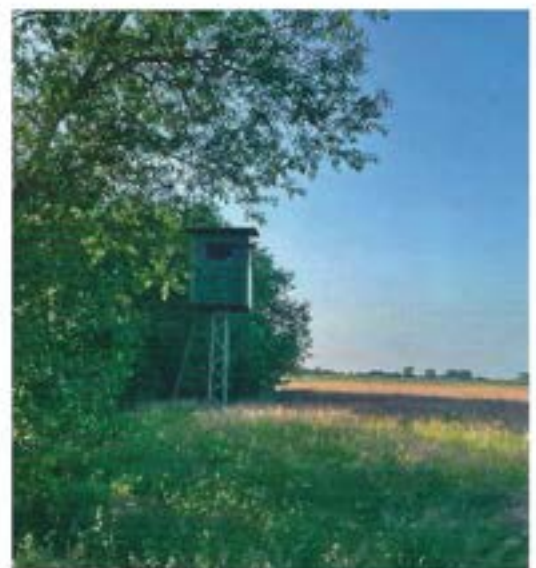
## Aidan Dunne Reports from Germany

Little did I realise when I first came across Hulmut Cywinski at the Irish Snipe Championship in 2018 that it would lead to some memorable hunting adventures in Germany. After that first meeting we became firm friends and I was delighted when he invited both Michael Houston and I in 2022 to Judge some Field Trials. However we both had misgivings, namely our alarming lack of the German spoken word, but we were reassured that most of the competitors could converse in English. Field trials in Germany are organised slightly different to the events here in that the hosting club run up to two Open Stakes and a Solo qualifying event each day. The trials were held in Neidergoersdorf, South of Berlin, part of old East Germany where fields can be up to 100 acres in size. The terrain was completely flat and the cover was Spring Wheat with the weather quite warm for April. Michael and I did not judge together but were partnered with a German official, in my case my good friend Bernd Gimble. Due to the presence of wild boar in the area, the game was not plentiful but I did see some excellent running dogs over the two day event. I found the German

people to be very friendly and our two night stay in a local hotel was great fun, culminating with my introducing some of the competitors to hurling. I watched a particular Munster Championship game on Saturday night which had a captive audience of German, Dutch and Polish enthusiasts. The Hotel owner was so taken by the game he supplied free beer to ensure the now vocal supporters did not miss a minute of the game (hurling was really going down well now). Overall it was a most enjoyable weekend however the only down side was the eleven hundred kilometer round trip from Helmut's home to the trial ground.

We must have done something right as we were invited back to Judge the following October this time in Heinsberg, a mere three hundred kms journey. There was an added incentive namely goose hunting in Helmut's area of Rhede on the banks of the river Ems in Northern Germany. But firstly it was two days of trials ran in the same format as our previous visit. The ground while again flat was a

mixture of beet, stubble and potatoes. There was an excellent supply of game and again some lovely running dogs. In fact our winner, an English Setter handled by Ms Nina Wollmann produced an outstanding performance culminating in her being awarded a CACIT. Once the trial was over it was back to Rhede and try our hand at some Geese. Now having never even fired at a Goose this was a whole new experience for me. Michael on the other hand is very experienced so it was decided that he would accompany Heinz,



A hide or blind, situated up high and in a perfect location

Helmut's shooting partner while I would go with our host. Having spent hours in my youth standing waiting for a duck I was mildly amused to be given a stool to sit on when we arrived at the river's edge. The Ems is a tidal affair with huge banks on either side to prevent flooding. It is also quite busy with barge activity. Arriving at 6.30am we made our way to an area heavily covered with (very) high reeds and sat on our stools. As dawn broke there was plenty of activity with duck, mainly Mallard, patrolling up and down the river for any danger but the reeds kept us well hidden. I held my fire after all we were here or Geese. Helmut who wasn't very far away enquired no hissed was I going to fire at all. 'What about the Geese' I enquired but was assured that they would come. With that 'bang' I brought down a Teal. Isla the Gordon Setter immediately took to the water and made a very efficient retrieve. While delighted all I heard in my right ear was 'too small' credit not easily given here then. When the Geese did arrive they were everywhere. We had a beautiful position but I simply couldn't countenance sitting down while shooting. So reverting to type I waited slightly crouched until the right opportunity and took a grey about twenty yards out. Isla was away again and before she had returned I had a second and a miss on another. Helmut skillfully took

a third and then a Mallard which was a long way out. The arrival of a barge out of the gloom suspended all activity but once it was around the rivers bend I managed to take one more before we called it a day. On the short walk back to the vehicle we put approximately twenty out of a lagoon at the side of the river but didn't fire as we had enough to do in carrying our load. Geese are heavy... I commented that we hadn't heard a shot from Michael's direction who duly joined us with four. That evening it was back to the river again. On our arrival Heinz informed us of a large gathering of Canadians only two fields away. As we approached they lifted surprisingly fast and I picked out one who immediately fell. Michael tried for another but he was further away and was unsuccessful. Canadian geese are huge and Isla, despite her best efforts, was unable to retrieve it. Helmut went to her assistance and what he returned with was a monster.



Michael showing the difference between a Teal and a Canadian Goose

Of course I was immediately told if it had been smaller I'd never have knocked it. We moved back to an area near the river but the Geese appeared to be avoiding us but Micheal did have a Mallard. The following morning we returned to the river but it was completely covered in fog. By the time it lifted, what Geese we saw were too high up and we left them untroubled. Unfortunately this was our last day and we returned home

pleased after a very satisfying few days.

I had hardly arrived home when Helmut called to invite me for some deer hunting. Again another discipline I had never tried I readily agreed and in June past I arrived back to try my hand at a stag. The hunting area that Helmut has access to is approximately 500 hectares in size. It is all arable land crisscrossed with small roads and laneways. The area is rented from the local government and there are five members of the syndicate. There is simply an abundance of game due entirely to the control of vermin by the members. Pheasants, hare and Roe deer are the main quarry but there was also a very large population of curlew, cuckoo, oyster catchers and even a surprising number of woodcock. The first evening was spent training dogs which involved some blood tracking which was most interesting. All hunting dogs must retrieve before they can be brought hunting. To this end they must have passed a test before the age of three and be certified as to their hunting abilities by law or they cannot be used for shooting. Pudelpointer, Munsterlander and German Wirehaired are the popular choice in the area.



170 meters, not bad for a first effort. Leaves were placed in his mouth which is a time honoured German hunting custom to honour the deer.