

What Should Inclusiveness Mean for DMGs?



Richard Cooke, Chairman, ADMG

We are advised from time to time by Government bodies that Deer Management Groups should be "inclusive" and I am sometimes asked what this means in practice.

The common sense view is that Deer Management Groups should, in their own interest, communicate with all relevant interests to ensure that there is a good local understanding of how and why the wild deer in their area are managed as they are. In that way DMGs can maintain local support and raise awareness of the requirements of deer management and the contribution it makes to jobs and communities.

There should be a clear distinction between the inner circle of DMG members and those external interests with whom communications are desirable but who have no place in the decision making process. If DMG meetings were to be open to all comers, as I have heard suggested in the interests of inclusiveness, I believe that this would impede the practical management discussions that Groups need to have among themselves. It is however appropriate for the relevant public bodies, i.e. SNH, Forestry Commission, Police Scotland etc to be in attendance.

In saying that DMG membership should extend to those with a direct interest in the management of deer I would include those for whom deer management for sporting purposes is not necessarily a main objective. Many DMGs now include NGO landholdings and indeed private estates for whom environmental change rather than stalking is the main management objective. It is good to see these more diverse interests participating fully within a Deer Management Group, notwithstanding the difficulties that can arise between sporting and non-sporting neighbours.

I would also include among those with a direct interest in deer management the agricultural and forestry interests often found on the periphery of the deer forest areas but within the overall deer range. Deer culled by farmers, crofters and foresters to protect their economic interests certainly need to be taken into account if the deer population is to be managed as a whole, as it should be. Farming interests may not wish to involve themselves closely in the work of a Deer Management Group or attend meetings on a regular basis but open lines of communication are certainly most desirable.



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Land Reform Review



Dick Playfair

The Land Reform Review Group presented its interim report in May. This group's remit is to re-examine the Land Reform Scotland Act 2003 and propose new and additional ways to achieve land reform. The group is independent, and is chaired by Dr Alison Elliot, former Moderator of the Church of Scotland. Both the group's other original appointees, Sarah Skerratt and Jim Hunter, have resigned, - one being replaced by Ian Cooke and further appointments are expected that may take the group up to 5 in number. Dr Elliot sees this very much as her report, and is keen to stress her independence from Government. Next year she will present the group's recommendations and Government will then adopt those recommendations or not as it sees fit.

It is fair to say that few, if any, have claimed to be delighted with the content of the interim report.

The land reformists don't think the recommendations go nearly far enough and have described land reform on the basis of the interim report as 'dead in the water'. Scottish Labour takes that view also. They also would like it to be more radical.

Scottish Land & Estates (SL&E) encouraged a good level of response to the consultation - of the 475 responses to phase one, two fifths of these were classed as from estate, farm owner and landowner interests. SL&E submitted a massive amount of 'evidence' in its response. So what are the main outcomes in our view?

Basically this stage clearly didn't grab the attentions of an urban audience at all. There was only one response from a predominantly urban local authority, and one from an urban

local community organisation, and yet the review is meant to address both urban and rural. Consequently, phase two will spend more time addressing the urban context.

Views on land ownership were inevitably polarised, some saying that currently it's inequitable and unjust; others that the status quo is fine and working, and there was a lack of evidence for further reform.



Dr Alison Elliot

There is a definite fixation with community land ownership, or community involvement in the management of land. There is a move towards some type of extension to the community right to buy, or right to be involved. Dr Elliot has however said that whilst more communities should be in control this must be in a real-world environment, and this inevitably means that some will fail. There is to be consideration of a new land agency to negotiate purchases of land from private owners by community groups.

There was a call for better communication between landowners, communities and authorities - even though



Rural Scotland - the inevitable target for future land reform
Photo: Glyn Satterley

there is strong evidence that communities are now far better engaged than ever before.

Other themes emerging included the old chestnuts of land value taxation and changes to succession rights to break the pattern of land ownership. Woodland and forestry (and in particular community ownership), rural affordable housing, and crofting, including the unworkability of the crofting community right to buy were also raised.

Whilst the Review Group deferred all decisions on the future of Scotland's tenant farming legislation to the Tenant Farming Forum, Cabinet Secretary Richard Lochhead subsequently announced at the end of May that he will undertake a top to bottom review of the agricultural holdings legislation in 2014.

On access, the status quo was widely felt to be working although there was some criticism either way.

SL&E, in its response to the interim report, was discontented expressing disappointment at the continuing view that the pattern of land ownership in Scotland is unfair and unjust when landowners are in fact a force for good. There was concern at the perceived need for further scrutiny of landowners' affairs, particularly given the amount of regulation and reporting already in place, and there was opposition to the suggestion for mandatory standards and sanctions for non-compliance in community engagement.

There was reaffirmation by SL&E that the sale or transfer of an asset should be on a 'willing seller – willing buyer' basis and there was no need for a new national land agency to oversee this. SL&E also tellingly said that it could see no evidence that significant demand exists for land reform across much of Scotland, and urged caution against the tendency to manufacture it.

A far greater threat than the Land Reform Review Group would appear to lie in Scottish Labour's bid to trump the Group's recommendations. Johann Lamont has called for land reform by expropriation if this is what is meant by "If it is in the public interest, communities will have the right to purchase land, even when the land owner is not a willing seller." Those calls were echoed in a Labour-led debate in the Scottish Parliament on 5 June with the SNP Government accused of stalling on land reform until after the independence referendum.

In response to these accusations that it has lost the plot, the Scottish Government said that a £6 million injection of cash into the Scottish Land Fund is evidence of its commitment to the cause.

Meanwhile, Dr Elliot, with or without a full team, will be very much on track for her independent group to deliver its recommendations in 2014.

ADMG Representatives Report Good Progress on Deer Management Front to Minister for Environment at Briefing Meeting

ADMG representatives met in late April with Paul Wheelhouse MSP, Minister for Environment and Climate Change, who also has responsibility for deer issues.

The meeting was held to discuss the work of ADMG and progress made since the passing of the Wildlife and Natural Environment (Scotland) Act, 2011, and also the progress of the Lowland Deer Network Scotland (LDNS).

The meeting was attended by Richard Cooke, Chairman of ADMG and LDNS, and Finlay Clark, ADMG Secretary. The agenda covered ADMG's role and relationship with the Scottish Government and its agencies, deer numbers and impacts, designated sites, Deer Management Groups and deer management planning, as well as issues such as competence and the emerging concept of 'wild land'.

Richard Cooke, ADMG Chairman, said:

"I think that there is good momentum with regard to the Wildlife and Natural Environment (Scotland) Act. Everybody in the sector has recognised the responsibilities embodied in the Code of Deer Management and are finding it helpful, particularly when drawing up or updating deer management plans.

"The legislation appears to have been taken seriously by those in the sector and, when it is reviewed, I am confident that we can show good progress.

"I think there is still work to do in raising awareness of the Code among those who cull deer on an occasional basis to protect their economic interests such as crops and trees, particularly in relation to competence.

"In an ideal world we would like anyone who takes a rifle to shoot a deer to be doing so under the same standards, but I think the introduction of the General License and the emphasis on training to demonstrate competence has been a helpful move in that direction."

Paul Wheelhouse MSP, Minister for Environment and Climate Change said:

"The messages we have received back regarding the Act, the Code and deer management generally suggest that good progress is being made particularly in certain areas where previously concerns had been expressed.

"The LDNS low ground initiative fills a gap and, for the record, we very much welcome the work that is being done to establish the Lowland Deer Network and the contribution that it is making."



Flexibility is an Option for Sporting Lets says SCSTG



Dick Playfair

Dick Playfair talks to Victoria Brooks of the Scottish Country Sports Tourism Group, and Alastair MacGugan of SNH about developments and opportunities

in the stalking tourism sector.

Whilst the established system of letting stags and hinds in Scotland by the week, often with accommodation, is the mainstay of the sector, there is room for some providers to introduce more flexibility both in terms of pricing and length of stay according to Victoria Brooks, Manager of the Scottish Country Sports Tourism Group (SCSTG). She says that this may help particularly in tapping into the lucrative Northern European market.

Following a foray earlier this year to the Hohe Jagd & Fischerei exhibition in Salzburg, Austria, and two trips in previous years to the Jagd & Hund Fair at Dortmund, Germany, Europe's largest hunting exhibition, the SCSTG team is now well up to speed with what this important and developing market for country sports in Scotland wants and how we can capitalise on it.

The value of country sports tourism to Scotland is estimated at some £200 million, with an international contribution to that of around 15 to 20 per cent, so it's certainly worth nurturing.

Victoria Brooks says:

"Recent research undertaken by the Association of Deer Management Groups (ADMG) provided a very broad benchmark for the price paid for a sporting stag at anywhere between £240 and £600. Much is dependent on the make-up of the package, but we know that North European hunters particularly will pay higher prices where the provider is flexible about what is offered. A lot of stalking estates are selling their stags at well below the top price for perfectly valid reasons, such as retaining long-standing and loyal repeat business, but it is interesting to note that there are other options.



Victoria Brooks

"It's perfectly understandable that a lot of estates simply wish to see all their stags let - however, Europeans expect to pay a premium. This does require some considerable forward planning with prices set a year in advance, and weeks or days let a year in advance, so the opportunities to introduce change are few."

Where an agency is engaged, or the management of the sporting is leased out to operators (who may also be the stalkers), then prices might be £500 and upwards, but generally where the estate itself is the provider then for Europe a higher price would easily be within what that market is prepared to pay.

Alastair MacGugan of SNH was also on the SCSTG stand promoting opportunities for hunting in Scotland at both Dortmund and Salzburg. He says:

"It's about both price and flexibility. Accommodation, where not in a lodge or on the estate, should be appropriate and field-sports friendly - preferably a member of the growing Fieldsports Welcome scheme. Some clients may wish to book for less than a week because there will be other things that they want to do as part of their visit - golf, a whisky tour, sightseeing. Not all will want stalking, dawn to dusk, every day, so some creativity will be required in putting their programme together."



SCSTG stand at Salzburg Fair

"There are also opportunities for estates to be more proactive in working with each other, offering different beats, different stalkers, different terrain and a broader experience - or even to mix hunting in England and Scotland, so a couple of days at the muntjac or big fallow bucks in the south of England, then moving north to Scotland for the red stags.

"There are certainly opportunities for putting mixed packages or experiences together. For example how do we respond to an enquiry for five days stalking split to cover the east and the west coast, and a day in the woods?"

Victoria says that a number of agents and operators are thinking along these lines already and are geared up to deliver what this more demanding European market wants. She says;

"For example, in Salzburg we received an enquiry via an agent in Budapest for a package for 8 to 12 Russians including one night in Edinburgh with a visit to a club, de-luxe transfer to a good quality country hotel, driven grouse shooting for one day, then a whisky tour, then salmon fishing, then travel home on day five. Money was no object.

"And at the other end of the spectrum there was a couple looking for hare shooting and deer stalking for three days staying in simple accommodation with hot water! It would be great if we could service these types of enquiries more easily."

While SCSTG doesn't actually sell sport, it is increasingly the shop window between the providers and the clients, with the Salzburg Fair producing around 50 genuine enquiries and £150,000 of potential business. Says Victoria:

"Unfortunately many of the enquiries from Salzburg will be lost simply because of lack of availability, but we hope that they will convert for next year; and all are now on our database for future mailings."

Alastair MacGugan says that there is an issue about whether Scotland is seen to have sufficient numbers of stags to hunt. He says:

"The central Europeans – Germans, Austrians, Belgians, Dutch, Danes – primarily want stags and the full Scottish stag stalking experience. They don't expect a good stag every day, but they will settle for one good stag and a couple of cull stags over the duration. If they want to pay big money for a trophy stag then they don't expect that in Scotland but will choose the Carpathians or New Zealand for example. What visitors to Scotland tend to want is a 'fair' stag."

Victoria says that while SCSTG was primarily promoting hunting at the exhibitions in Europe there was interest in other areas too:

"We also received enquiries for bird shooting, game fishing and sea fishing, falconry, and even ferreting and goats, but it was stags mainly."

In terms of Fieldsports Welcome there are currently some 60 accommodation providers signed up, with the aim to expand that number. Victoria says:

"To service the market we need a good spread geographically, and we need a mixture of self catering, B & Bs and hotels. The common factor is that they have to be able to match the market requirement – so if it's for stalking that means early breakfasts and packed lunches, gun cabinets, a drying room for wet clothes, and probably dog-friendly.

"There will be a lot of establishments that match the criteria that are outside our scheme, and we would like to wrap a lot more into it particularly as we can now offer our new website as a part of that whole promotional package.

So what happens next? Says Victoria:

"We have a far better understanding of what our hunting visitors from the Northern Europe are looking for. They are within range, and we've done a lot of the groundwork. In many respects their hunting cultures are similar to ours, but we have something they absolutely want – which is the red stag in a Scottish landscape. So we need to build on this with PR, and with exposure in their newspapers and magazines, and we have just secured VisitScotland Growth funding to help us do that. We also need more providers to think carefully about pricing and flexibility and this will help open up these markets for everyone.

"We still have a lot of hurdles to overcome – SCSTG is a small organisation faced with doing a very big job. We are modestly funded but hugely grateful for the support

we do receive; we need to continue to build our market intelligence and data; we are working in a tourism sector that is very fragmented, with a solid, reliable clientele. And stalking is just one of the sports that we represent."

Despite this, SCSTG continues to deliver all it can, and to provide an invaluable service for Scotland's deer forests and stalking estates.



SCSTG new website

The Scottish Country Sports Tourism Group

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Tick - How to be Prepared for the Countryside Parasite

Kenneth Stephen,
Scottish Gamekeepers Association

If gamekeepers, ghillies or their sporting guests are heading out into the Scottish hills between April and October, there is a reasonable likelihood they will encounter tick.

Ticks are parasites that feed on the blood of a host, so working dogs, ponies (if used for stalking) and the sporting quarry itself is just as likely to become a host as a human.

While ticks have been around for as long as most people remember, changing farming practices and climate altering have seen their number rise. The spread of bracken is also a factor as it is a favoured cover for ticks to locate a 'host' as they pass. Gamekeepers and ghillies within the Scottish Gamekeepers Association are now reporting tick from sea level up to 2500 ft - a marked change from before.

Tick can transmit borreliosis or Lyme Disease, which can be highly debilitating and the incidences of Lyme Disease have increased eleven-fold in Scotland in the past decade. It is important, therefore, that those setting out into the hills and woods are mindful of the presence of tick and take appropriate precautions to minimise the chances of being bitten.



For those entertaining sporting clients, it is good policy to speak to guests before they set out as small things can help prevent tick bites. Insect repellents, although not specifically designed for tick, can be effective in keeping ticks off and many people will use this as standard for repelling midges. Similarly, some modern sporting garments are made specifically to protect against ticks, with waxy coatings and elasticated fastenings. Encouraging guests to make sure they are 'covered' is also wise. For example, tucking trousers into socks means there is one less place for ticks to engage.

It is also highly important that guests know what to look for if they suspect a tick bite and are equipped with the knowledge - and hopefully the correct tool- to remove a tick from the skin properly.

"It is important that people don't squeeze the tick when trying to remove it, apply anything to it or burn it," says George Macdonald of the SGA.

"A proper tick remover like the O'Tom Tick Twister should be used and what you are trying to do is remove all of the tick, so nothing is left in the skin, but also to avoid stressing the tick.

"If stressed, the tick can regurgitate its stomach contents into the host, thereby passing any infection it may carry."

After a day shooting, stalking or managing the ground, it is important to check for ticks on the skin when washing. Clothes, too, should be checked. While some countryside workers previously allowed a small tick to grow in size for ease of removal, this practice is no longer supported. While not all ticks carry Lyme Disease, it is critical that correct, timely, action is taken if there are signs of rash or inflammation around the bite. Caught early, most cases can be treated effectively with a 2 day or week-long course of antibiotics. Complications, some serious, can occur if borreliosis goes unheeded or untreated.

"The Scottish Gamekeepers Association has worked with BADA UK in awareness raising and their website is a great resource. The main thing is to try to prevent tick bites as much as possible. If bitten, clean, early removal with the appropriate tool is the best policy and if there are any signs of rash or redness, the doctor should be contacted immediately," added George Macdonald.

Lyme Disease

Lyme disease is a bacterial infection that is spread to humans by infected ticks. Ticks are tiny arachnids that feed on the blood of mammals including humans.

Tick bites often go unnoticed and the tick can remain feeding for several days before dropping off. The longer the tick is in place, the higher the risk of it passing on the infection.

Lyme disease can affect your skin, joints, heart and nervous system.

What are the symptoms of Lyme disease?

The earliest and most common symptom of Lyme disease is a pink or circular rash that develops around the area of the bite, three to 30 days after someone is bitten. The rash is often described as looking like a bulls eye on a dart board.

You may also experience flu-like symptoms, such as tiredness, headaches and muscle or joint pain.

If Lyme disease is left untreated, further symptoms may develop months or even years later and can include:

- **Muscle pain**
- **Joint pain and swelling of the joints**
- **Neurological symptoms, such as temporary paralysis of the facial muscles.**

Lyme disease in its late stages can trigger symptoms similar to those of fibromyalgia or chronic fatigue syndrome. This is known as chronic Lyme disease. More research into this form of Lyme disease is needed.

A person with Lyme disease is not contagious because the infection can only be spread by ticks.

Unless in its early stages when a rash is present, diagnosing Lyme disease is often difficult as many of the symptoms are similar to those of other conditions. Blood tests are useful and important in acute infection but don't always confirm diagnosis.

Diagnosed cases of Lyme disease can be treated with antibiotics. Courses of antibiotics will depend at which stage the Lyme disease is at, but they will usually need to be taken for two to four weeks.

How common is Lyme disease?

Lyme disease is the most common tick-borne infectious disease in Europe and North America. People who spend time in woodland or heath areas are more at risk of developing

Lyme disease because these are areas where tick carrying animals live.

Most tick bites occur in late spring, early summer and during the autumn because these are times of year when most people take part in outdoor activities.

Source: www.nhs.uk



When your job entails doing this on a regular basis then ticks will be an unavoidable hazard. Photo: Glyn Satterley

Scotland Rural Development Programme 2014 - 2020 Consultation



Victor Clements, Secretary of the Breadalbane Deer Management Group

Background

The Scottish Government is currently consulting on a new SRDP programme to run from 2014 - 2020. The Scottish Rural Development Programme (SRDP) is the primary mechanism for delivery of EU and Scottish Government funds in to rural development projects such as agri-environment schemes, forestry, community development, Less Favoured Area payments etc.

The initial consultation period concluded at midnight on Sunday 30 June. The website can be accessed at: www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/farmingrural/SRDP

There will be a second round of consultations in the autumn, with this round being used primarily to set the broad direction of travel. There will be a further opportunity therefore to develop ideas, and the necessary detail within those. The intention is that the new SRDP is ready for operation by autumn 2014.

Areas of Interest for ADMG

The previous SRDP 2008 - 13 had very little to offer deer managers, and uptake of deer-related options was very poor. It was considered too bureaucratic and difficult to access.

However, there are now two options to be aware of:

1. The suggestion that third parties could submit an application on behalf of a number of owners. This could apply to a Deer Management Group, or indeed ADMG, and could be used to apply for funds to help with writing Deer Management Plans, helping with training or providing facilities, or

any other matter which might further collaborative deer management in a local area. ADMG has suggested that the following budget might be applicable:

Developing traditional deer management support:
£150,000 X 5 years

Developing the lowland deer network:
£75,000 X 5 years

2. There is a suggestion that a proportion of the SRDP is used to set up an advisory service. During the Wildlife and Natural Environment Act consultation, ADMG suggested that some sort of arbitration service be established to deal with difficult deer/land management issues. There may be an opportunity here to take this forward. There may also be an opportunity to provide additional capacity to deal with training and competence issues, especially among farmers and crofters. In either case, such advice might best be provided as part of a wider land use advisory mechanism.

Finally, we should be aware of the recommendation that the Land Managers Options (LMO) mechanism be scrapped. This mechanism allowed every IACS registered business a non-competitive grant allocation that could be used for a variety of environmental and business development improvements, but the menu of options was poor, less than half of potential applicants applied, and only 1.9 per cent applied for their full allocation.

If such a mechanism is to be taken forward in the new programme, we should ask that deer management options be included. This may, for example, be very beneficial for providing training for farmers and crofters, equipment for larders, or contributions to deer management plans.

Breadalbane Deer Management Group



Victor Clements, Secretary of the Breadalbane Deer Management Group

Introduction

The Breadalbane Deer Management Group (BDMG) covers just over 90,000 ha. It has 31 subscribing members, and was formed in 2003 as an amalgamation of the East Glenlyon and West Rannoch Deer Management Groups. The Group area includes all of Glenlyon and Glen Lochay, the south side of the Rannoch system above Loch Tummel, and the northern part of the Dochart/ Fillan catchment, as well as the northern slopes of Loch Tay.

Group Membership

BDMG enjoys a very strong level of participation from among members of the Group, by both owners and stalkers. There are three main management regimes within the Group area:

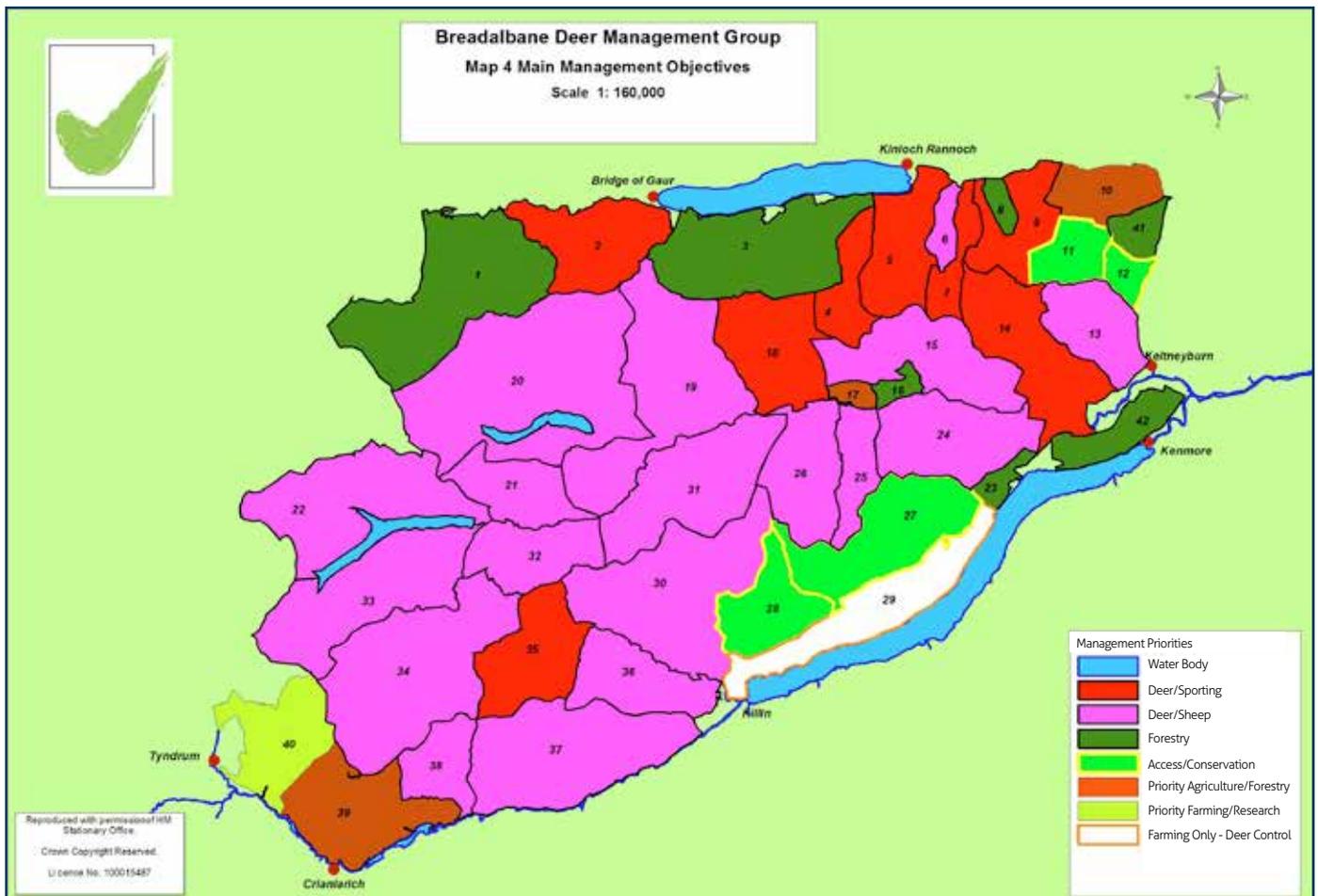
- Nine properties covering 25,000 ha or 28 per cent of the Group area that are solely interested in deer. Grouse moor management is a secondary consideration on half these units.
- 14 members covering 42,000 ha or 46 per cent of the Group area who regard deer as a primary management objective along with other sporting considerations, but who also have a significant farming interest. Numbers of sheep have reduced markedly in recent years, and a number of units have cleared their sheep stocks completely to concentrate on sporting objectives.

- Eight members covering 23,000 ha or 26 per cent of the area of the Group who view farming, forestry or conservation/ access/land use research as their primary land use objective. These include national public bodies, NGOs and research organizations: Forestry Commission Scotland (FCS), National Trust for Scotland (NTS), John Muir Trust (JMT) and Scottish Rural Colleges (SRUC), as well as one community group, the Highland Perthshire Community Land Trust (HPCLT).

Management Considerations

Over 20 per cent of the Group area is dominated by five large upland sites carrying SSSI, SAC and NNR designations. In 2008, over eight per cent of all designated sites in Scotland in unfavourable condition due to grazing were in Breadalbane. It was a big priority for government agencies to deal with this, led at the time by the Deer Commission for Scotland (DCS).

To its credit, DCS allowed the Group members to find their own solutions, and funded an upgrade of the previous deer management plan. Negotiations were long and complex, but the Group eventually got there and in 2010, a Section 7 agreement was signed to consolidate the commitments in the Deer Management Plan. It also allowed funds to be made available for helicopter counts and habitat survey work. In many ways, Breadalbane was the big deer argument that never really happened, despite being potentially much more controversial than some of the other issues that have reached the press in recent years. Keeping things under the radar and dealing with them quietly was the right thing to do. There is a lesson in this.



We are now in the fourth year of the Section 7 agreement. Three of the five sites are going forwards very well and are ahead of target, one requires harder work, and deer are not the limiting factor on the other.

We are generally positive about the future, and no-one has had to compromise their stag cull targets at all. From the start, economic and social issues got the same weighting as environmental ones.

There are other things happening. Some of our members participate in Group marketing of venison around Loch Rannoch, we have been trying to engage farming interests and we have a steady stream of woodland creation schemes and forest plans which we comment on. We take Health & Safety matters very seriously, and are participating in the Heading to the Scottish Hills initiative.

It is a good Group in which to be involved. Like everywhere else, people come and go and things evolve, but we have tried to encourage gradual change, communicate problems and avoid surprises and that seems to work just fine. We will try to keep it that way.



Red hinds on low ground
Photo: Victor Clements

Victor Clements is a self employed woodland advisor and Secretary of the Breadalbane Deer Management Group.

Shorts

Perth Meat Trade Fair

The Fair took place on Sunday 12 May. This was the first year that Scottish Venison had been represented both with a stand and a venison butchery demonstration. There was a lot of interest from independent butchers in where they could source local venison and the general feeling is that it sells well when available. Hunters of Kinross won one of the coveted Diamond Awards at the event for their Scottish Wild Venison Stir Fry.

The lucky winner of a day's hind stalking on the Dougurie Estate on Arran will be drawn at the GWCT Scottish Game Fair.

ADMG London Meeting

More than 50 deer forest and upland estate owners based in London and the south of England were able to hear about the latest developments on the deer front in Scotland direct from ADMG and SNH at a meeting at the offices of Fleming Family & Partners on Wednesday 19 June. The majority of papers and presentations from that meeting are now available on the website at www.deer-management.co.uk/meetings

Seminar for DMG Chairmen and Secretaries

A special seminar was held for Deer Management Group Chairmen and Secretaries at the Birnam Institute on Friday 15 March. Under the title 'Towards A More Effective DMG' the purpose of the event was to provide Chairs and Secretaries with a forum for sharing ideas, methods, and techniques for effectively running a DMG, information on how to maximise participation from Group members, and information on consensus building conflict avoidance, and resolution. The day consisted of a number of presentations and workshops with more than 50 attending, and in the region of 25 DMGs represented.

Scottish Food & Drink awards Rannoch Smokery

Scotland's legendary game smoker, Rannoch Smokery clinched the accolade for Best Meat category at the 2013 Scottish Food and Drink Awards on 30 May. With over 20 years of perfecting and adapting tastes to meet its loyal and expanding market,

Rannoch Smokery has now moved into a more refined range of venison, beef and ham to add to the 'smorgasbord' which it has already accumulated in its larders.

Date of next Regional Meeting

The next ADMG Regional Meeting will take place on Wednesday 4 December in Inverness. Further details to follow.



The Hunters of Kinross team scoop a Diamond Award
Photo: SFMTA



Healthy participation
at the Birnam seminar

Scottish Venison Partnership - Report on the Year 2012 - 13



Stephen Gibbs

The Scottish Venison Partnership (SVP) has continued to be busy with the major issue of how to increase Scottish venison production to meet growing market demand.

In broad terms, the wild red cull is static or declining, the UK market for venison is reported as growing at 25 per cent plus per annum, and the main game dealers have reported an increasing shortfall with their imports in excess of 25,000 carcasses equivalent in 2012 from New Zealand and Poland. Imported Spanish venison is now also coming into the UK market.

The plan, endorsed by the Scottish Venison Strategy Group (and the Cabinet Secretary in his press statement of May 2012) is to increase production in Scotland by one third by 2020. Scotland currently produces around 3500 tonnes of venison. By comparison, New Zealand produced 22,900 tonnes in 2011/12.

SVP is involved in a number of initiatives, some with the Scottish Venison Strategy Group:

More and better information

We need more accurate market information. This is now being achieved in part through Scotland Food and Drink Insights. Also, an Interface funded project with Napier University Business School will determine more accurately quantities of venison produced in Scotland, the rest of the UK, New Zealand, Poland and Spain; quantities of venison imports into the UK; and a system for ongoing annual reporting.

There will also be regular monitoring through SF&D Insights of market trends across retail, catering and food service where such figures are available.

Supply chain

SVP has been actively promoting opportunities to 'join up' local producers and local markets, particularly specialist butchers and individual estates.

With the SGA and the Lowland Deer Network Scotland (LDNS), SVP held two evenings for butchers last September in the Borders and Aberdeen.

SVP also attended the Perth Meat Trades Fair in May with a stand, and a venison butchery demonstration by Iain Hunter (Hunters of Kinross) and Nichola Fletcher. Hunters also won a Diamond Award for their Scottish Wild Venison Stir Fry.

Two more butchers' events are planned this September in Kilmarnock and Stepps with LDNS, and the Scottish Venison leaflet for butchers' customers has been updated and reprinted. Much of this work has been funded by SNH.

Scottish Venison Day

A Scottish Venison Day event was staged at the Edinburgh New Town Cookery School in September 2012 for food media. The 2013 Scottish Venison Day event will be held on 4 September in Fife in conjunction with Scottish Land & Estates and the British Deer Farms and Parks Association.

Deer Parks/Farming

An application has been developed and submitted for £96,500

funding under the Skills Development Scheme for a two year deer farm demonstration project. This is an estimated £131,000 project in total, the balance made up by contributions in kind from Scotland Food and Drink, NFUS, SFQC, the Venison Advisory Service and SVP.

The project aim is to reach 200 potential new deer farm/park businesses in two years, providing them with the tools to diversify - a manual, supporting information on DVD/YouTube, showcasing of venison products, routes to market etc.

There is also a second Interface-funded research project briefed to Aberdeen University/The Hutton Institute to determine barriers preventing diversification into deer farming/parks in Scotland.

Promotion

The website www.scottish-venison.info remains the main promotional platform for SVP.

Funding

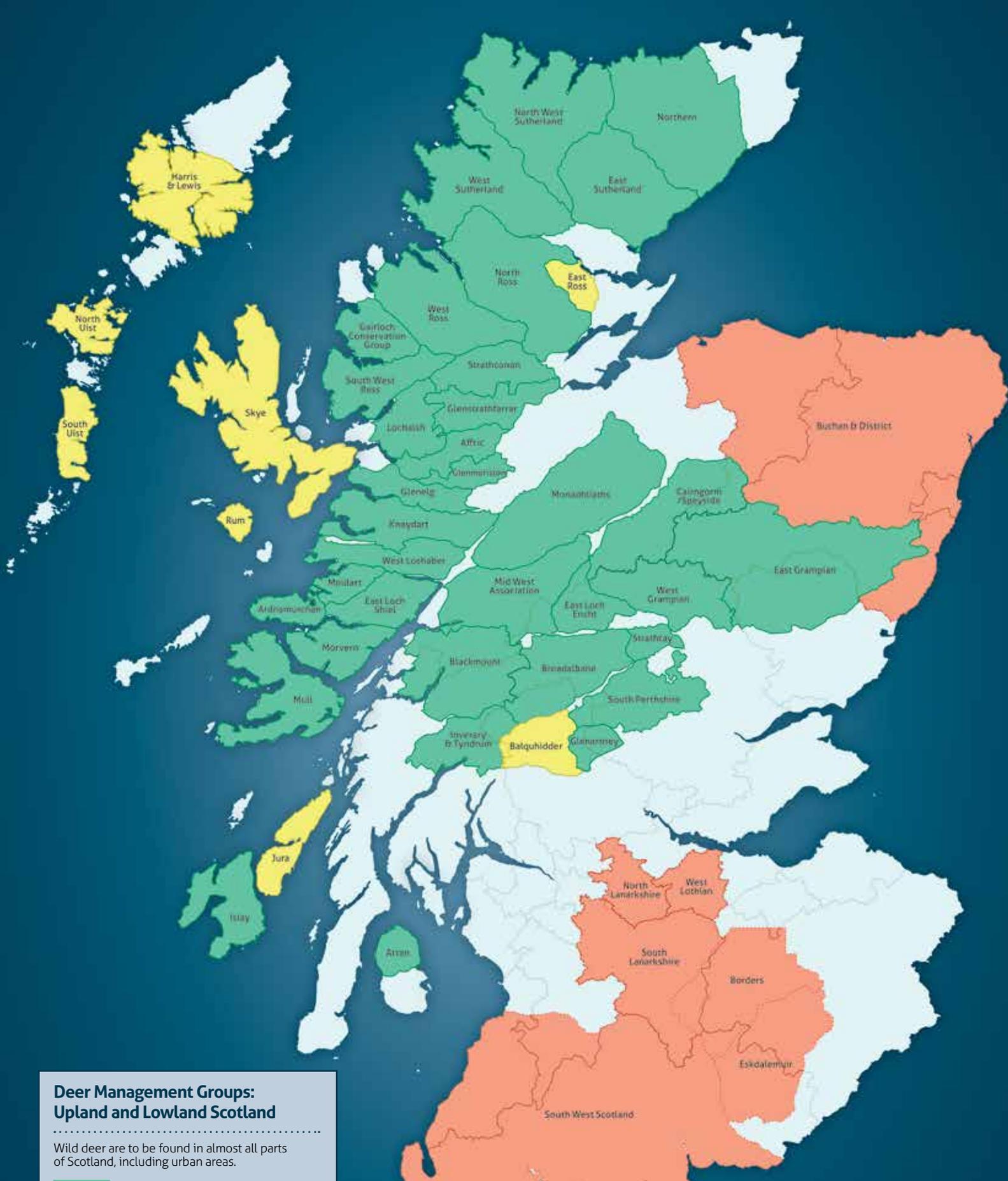
SVP's total annual budget (excluding activity undertaken and/or paid for by SNH) is around £24,000. Just under half comes from the 1p/kilo levy. There are now 3 game dealers (Ardgay Game, Highland Game and Yorkshire Game), all SQWV accredited, collecting the levy from this summer. Core funding remains secure from Forest Enterprise for a further two years and additional support has been pledged by Highland Game in June, to keep the Group on a stable footing.

Other activity during 2012/13

- Ongoing attendance at the Deer Management Round Table.
- Input into both the Welfare of Animals at Time of Killing (WATOK) discussions, and the Farm Animal Welfare Council (FAWC) ongoing dialogue on live capture (undertaken by John Fletcher).
- Input into the Glasgow 2014 Commonwealth Games Food Charter.
- Discussions with Government on payments to new entrants and those previously excluded from SFP to include deer farmers (undertaken by John Fletcher).
- Initiation of discussions with Forest Enterprise regarding opportunities for development of venison production on the National Forest Estate.
- Response to the EU proposal on trade in unskinned large wild game.



Nichola Fletcher and Iain Hunter on the SVP stand at the Perth Meat Trade Fair



Deer Management Groups: Upland and Lowland Scotland

Wild deer are to be found in almost all parts of Scotland, including urban areas.

- Upland deer management group areas (ADMG members)
- Other DMG areas
- Lowland areas with partial cover by lowland deer management groups

This is a schematic only. Areas marked are approximate and a DMG may not cover the whole of the area shown.

Not to scale.

The ADMG website www.deer-management.co.uk is undergoing an update, most notably with the addition of the deer management groups map.

Not only will this now allow those viewing the site to see which areas are covered by deer management groups, but each group will shortly have its own web page giving basic information about the area, main features, deer forests and estates, information about the deer and deer range, and contact details for the DMG.

There will also be a click-through link to the DMG's own website, should it have one.



The Last Working Deer Hounds in Scotland

Iain Thornber

*"A deer fell by every dog, three fell by Bran alone."
(Fingal - an ancient epic poem by Ossian.)*

When man swung down from the trees and took up hunting for food, hounds became his boon companions. The first use of hounds for pulling down deer has not been recorded and has been lost in the mists of time.

The great Ossianic sagas speak of a day's deer coursing on Skye in which three thousand deerhounds were loosed providing the old Gaelic bards of the island with enough material to sing of their heroic attributes for centuries thereafter.

Scrope, in his great work, *Deer-Stalking in the Scottish Highlands* (1838), wrote that deer hounds were held in such high regard in the eleventh century that only noblemen, or the *duine-uasal* as they were known, were allowed to keep them. However, writing in 1896, Donald Cameron of Lochiel, 24th Chief of Clan Cameron, was nothing less than practical when he suggested that the use of the humble collie for following up wounded deer was a safer bet in keeping the larder fully stocked than relying on the fickleness of a highly-strung hound of ancient lineage.

Deerhounds ran by sight and not by scent. Couples were used. However, before the dogs were slipped, the party first had to find the deer and then stalk them with the same skill and awareness of wind direction as if they were armed with a rifle.

The last estate owner in the Highlands to breed and use his own hounds to course deer was Mr K M Angelo of Culachy near Fort Augustus in the Monadhliath DMG. Angelo was an engineer who made a fortune manufacturing shellac in India in the 1850s. He bought the 6,000 acre Culachy Estate from the Frasers in 1894 and experimented with a strange mixture of Irish wolfhound, pure Scottish deerhound, boarhound, and Borzoi (Russian wolfhound) for coursing unwounded deer. One of the cross Irish wolfhounds weighed over nine stone and stood almost three feet at the shoulder.

One of Mr Angelo's guests left an account of a typical day's coursing on Culachy:

"The coursing generally took place on two large plateaux, the hounds being held in leash in couples at two separate points. A fast light bitch was generally used to make the running, and a heavier dog to pull the stag down and hold him at bay.

"The movements of the stag marked to hunt were signalled by a stalker in advance, and when it moved into a favourable position where the hounds could see it, they were loosed. Sometimes as many as six hounds were let go as to shorten the course and to keep the stag from travelling too far and playing havoc in the forest, but more often this was unnecessary, and two hounds did the work.

"Having once picked their stag, the hounds were seldom distracted, and would run their quarry through a large herd of deer without turning right or left. The course generally lasted for two miles or so, and the best dogs were capable of dragging down, and even killing, the stag single-handed. By his sportsmanlike conduct Mr Angelo no doubt sent a good many deer to his neighbour's ground but I have no doubt he also had a great deal of fun for himself and those who were allowed to witness the hunt. With the deerhounds he usually killed about twenty stags every season. [Approximately half the annual cull.]"

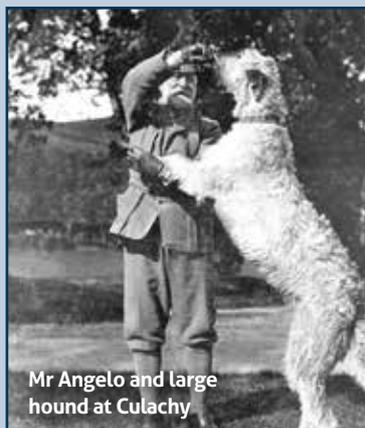
Following Mr Angelo's death in 1912 his hounds were never coursed again in earnest, and they saw out their days in a specially built enclosure. There is a family tale of an old tramp falling into the enclosure and being savaged to death by the hounds because they were starving through want of food occasioned by the Great War. Another man was attacked and had his arm torn off. Both incidents were hushed up but it was the beginning of the end.

In 1915 distemper got amongst the pack and so many of them had to be destroyed all except one dog and a bitch. They failed to produce any progeny and the famous 'Culachy' strain disappeared. In 1959 the Red Deer (Scotland) Act banned coursing deer with dogs.

The writer is indebted to the late Lea MacNally, deer stalker, photographer and author for sharing his knowledge of Culachy and its unique deerhounds.



Mr Angelo deer coursing



Mr Angelo and large hound at Culachy



15th century representation of hounds and hunters on a tomb at Rodel, Harris
Photo: © Courtesy of RCAHMS Licensor rcahms.gov.uk

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