

Western Ireland

Received from Lyall:

Hi Bill,

Just back from two weeks in Connemara in western Ireland walking the hills and chasing trout in managed fisheries. The fly fishing process is a little different from the easy going (and better) Australian version. The process involves identifying who owns the rights to the river or lough, finding them then buying a permit then fishing by the rules of that particular water. This all means that spontaneous fishing is out but well managed, low fishing pressure waters are available across Ireland. It also means that fishing clubs have a revenue stream and can put money back into stocking and riverbank management which is good. But honestly, I would rather by an annual fishing license and hike into any river I could get legitimate access to and move from place to place according to the conditions.

The area I fished was the chain of Lough Inagh, Derryclare Lough and Ballynahinch fishery with the first two being managed out of Lough Inagh Lodge Hotel and the third from Ballynahinch Castle Hotel (they both have good web sites), each with its own fisheries managers and guides who were experts on every inch of their beats. All these waters looked very fishy and just called out to be fished. Rather than Thredbo River clarity, the water was brown with peat so sight fishing was not an option and river craft (random acts of clumsy casting on my part) was called for. Another fun challenge was fishing with a 13' 4" Sage double handed spey rod with a Wulff Ambush Taper spey line which just flew off the rod tip and, as a pair, was christened the Lethal Weapon by Colin the fisheries manager at Lough Inagh Lodge. This set up landed a nice wild brown off Pine Island on Derryclare Lough on a Silver Rat double hook fly which later doubled as ear jewellery when a gale blew up from my right (at least that's my story ...) and had to be ripped out by the gillie.

Ballynahinch fishery was set up by Indian fly fishing enthusiast Maharaja Ranjitsinhji in the 1800s with the castle having been built in the 1700s. Ranji as he was known, was also a keen cricketer for British county teams and played the 1897-98 Test in Australia ... and lost. Like Lough Inagh, the deal with fishing guides and hiring a beat is that fishing begins at 9.30, everyone stops for lunch and fishing ends at 17.30. You and I would usually fish the dawn and dusk and fill in the hours in between with a bit of a splash around but not in Connemara. Lunch at Ballynahinch is in their pub surrounded by trophy browns and salmon in glass display cases and a twenty-plus foot spit cane rod hanging on a wall the length of the pub. One striking feature of both Lough Inagh Lodge and Ballynahinch that only Australians would notice is that the staff and patrons could be snobs, but they were not. The hotel actually encourages patrons to wear

their wet waders into the bar and sit down for lunch - now that is fly fishing heaven!!! Everyone yells from table to table about the morning's near misses and what flies ought to be working.

A handful of nice brown trout and plenty of salmon and trout parr were caught on alternate days of site seeing or hill walking and fishing. Any country which has monks' cottages in the middle of salmon rivers with a hole in the floor and a net which triggers a string to the abbey to alert them to their remote-control salmon catch and stone monuments with plaques noting that "On this site in 1897 nothing happened" is OK by me and worth a return visit.

Bye for now,

Lyall

CAA member banished to Singapore



Gillie Ulrich loading up the #8 double hander



Wild brown, Derryclare Lough



Glen Inagh River



Ballynahinch Castle Fishery



Ballynahinch Castle pub



Monk's salmon catching cottage



Sign in Recess village