

The Irish Working Terrier Federation



Steve McGonigal believes the organisation, established in 2012, is here to stay

WHAT began with one man and his passion to maintain terrier work in Ireland only a few short years ago has quickly become a countrywide organisation with an ever growing list of affiliated clubs and members who work by a code of conduct and both promote and protect legitimate terrier work in Ireland.

Barrie Wade, from the National Working Terrier Federation, got together with several terriermen over the weekend of the Ballywalter Game Fair. The wheels were set in motion for the surmountable task of maintaining and protecting terrier work in Ireland, to show it for what it is and not what it is assumed to be, and that is a humane form of pest control.



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In accordance with its constitution – the primary aims and objectives of the IWTF are:

- To promote the best, most humane and efficient practices in relation to the use of working terriers for pest control purposes.
- To improve public awareness of the manner in which properly conducted terrier work is carried out.
- To encourage new participants to join a recognised working terrier club and to learn from more experienced members.
- To assist, advise and educate the newcomer or less experienced person.
- To unify the working terrier clubs under one umbrella organisation and provide a single reference point and centre of excellence on matters relating to terrier work.
- To counter the activities of those who by their actions, or intent, would bring terrier work into disrepute.
- To protect both the working terrier and its owner from all forms of harmful legislation.

I never imagined that the Irish Working Terrier Federation (IWTF) – established at the beginning of 2012 – would become the professional, hard working and admirable organisation it has become today, the work it would do and what it would achieve in such a short time.

A committee was formed during a meeting in Cork and everyone agreed that the IWTF would strive to protect terrier work and not sit back and leave it to others. A constitution was drafted alongside a membership structure and members got to work on a strategic approach to deal with upcoming Government legislation at the time which was a threat to terrier work.

A meeting by Rural Ireland Says Enough (RISE) in Cork, in June the same year, would prove to be a pivotal time for the IWTF and it could be said it was the spark that ignited the powder keg. Dedicated terriermen travelled from all over Ireland to be in attendance.

For the first time the IWTF's banner was revealed (someone placed it on the wall behind the top table) and the IWTF received the support of John Flannery from the Irish Foot Harriers Association (IFHA) during his rousing speech to the audience. After further work and some committee adjustments things really moved forward for the IWTF and nothing was going to stop them.

On September 24 they received written support from the IFHA. In November the same year they received written support from the Countryside Alliance Ireland which was a much welcomed boost. On the flip side, November was also a tentative time for the IWTF.

With the *Animal Health and Welfare Bill* being passed in the Republic of Ireland, the threat of a ban on terrier work loomed. However, thankfully (and in no small part to the IWTF), on December 5, all anti-hunting amendments were voted down by an enormous majority and terrier work and the IWTF were here to stay.

Constant threat

Incredibly there are still terriermen out there with little knowledge of the constant threat from antis and unwarranted changes in legislation that could, if unchallenged, directly affect them. The days of burying heads in the sand and doing nothing, taking the lead from others with less knowledge of terrier work is long over.

With a strong, passionate and hard working committee, a growing membership of both terriermen and supporters, affiliations with fellow fieldsports organisations and an ever increasing membership, coupled with a professional website and a presence at Irish fieldsports events, they most definitely are here to stay.

However, the fight is not over and anti-hunting groups are relentless in their war against not only terrier work but any form of hunting or fieldsports. It is imperative that we stand up for what we do, what we believe in and what we love, whatever your sport.

It is all our right to fish, ferret, hunt with hounds or carry out humane pest control – let us keep it that way. I take my hat off to the IWTF, its founders, its committee, its members and its supporters – long may they continue. For more information and to join, visit www.iwtf.ie



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