

# ADMIRING ENGLISH GAME IN THEIR COUNTRY OF ORIGIN

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**Part 1: From the south of England to the north of Ireland**

**Above : Marc McCullough's chicken houses at Donaghadee, North Ireland. In the background is the estate where Marc's father used to work for many years.**

**When you are a passionate breeder of English Game bantams, both Old and Modern, you want to keep yourself posted up on the latest developments of the breed. Thus you also try to visit the larger International Shows. In the autumn of 2011, visiting THE Show for Old English Game was mooted...**

German breeder Dieter Rüppel was the organiser for the trip. He arranged appointments with breeders, overnight stays and ferry crossings. It would be a trip from South England to Northern Ireland. The fellow travelers—along with Dieter as a driver—were Jutta Niemann, Christoph Mooren, Hubert Grondorf and me. Unfortunately, because I had to judge at the Noordshow, I could not depart on the scheduled travel day, but left on January 5, and joined my travel companions.

**Right:  
A breeding pen of Mark Perkins' Pile Old English Game bantams.**

That Thursday, they had visited the Harvey Family in Liskeard. Mr. Harvey is one of the leading breeders of large







Indian Game and the quality of his birds is highly regarded. Bad luck I missed out this time.

**Left: Large Indian Game cock and hens at James Harvey's in Liskeard, Cornwall—the region of origin of this impressive breed.**

**Below: An Indian Game cock, looking commanding and courageous. Legs are thick and set wide apart, providing a firm foundation for the heavy body.**



**Above: The females. Perfect shape, perfect colour and marking. In Holland, the double-lacing still is a point of attention.**



**Left: The Harvey family gave us a warm welcome and provided great hospitality. A sumptuous meal was served with typical Cornish products.**





Friday morning, January 6—after a hearty English breakfast—we went to visit the Perkins family in Wick. Mark Perkins is a breeder of several game bantam breeds but the Old English is his favourite. Mark is not unknown to a number of Dutch, because he regularly visits the Entente meetings on behalf of England.

**Left: A look at Mark Perkins' chicken houses. These small coops can easily be moved to fresh grass in the meadow.**



Next, we headed to northern England. Along the way we visited the Lowe family in Byley, who keep Old English in large and bantam. We were shown top quality birds, in both Blue Brassy Back and Brassy Back.

We also saw their Welsh ponies, with which they compete at a high level in England.

**Left: Graham Lowe, proudly showing a Brown Red Old English Game LF cock. Notice the very perky bantam hens in the background.**



**Left: The same Brown Red cock taken in hand. Note the ideal heart shaped body when viewed across the back. When you gently press the wingtips to the saddle, you get a good view of the body shape. In hand, you can also feel the breastbone that should curve up from the legs.**



**Right: Another Brown Red Old English Game cock at Graham Lowe's, with parallel set legs and muscular thighs.**



**Left: Graham Lowe getting a hen in the preferred show stance. Same as in the Netherlands, the birds are trained here to become accustomed to being handled and being kept in show pens.**



**Below right: A breeding pair of Blue Duckwing Old English Game at Graham Lowe's. Note the cock's heavy shoulder butts and the tight belly, giving a clear view through the legs.**



**Below: We took a lot of photos here; this is a Blue Furness bantam hen.**



**After the usual tea we headed to Carlisle, where we arrived around 8 pm. Next day**

**was the Carlisle Show which we really enjoyed. You can read all about this in Part 2, in the August issue.**

**Immediately after the show we left for Northern Ireland, along with Austin and Robert Shaw. The ferry boat of 20.00 in Stanraer had to be taken.**



During the crossing we chatted with several Northern Irish breeders who were returning home. After two hours, we reached Larne. The Shaw family had arranged accommodation in a local pub for the night, where we experienced the hospitality of the locals. After some pleasant hours and several drinks, it was finally time to get some sleep.

**Right: In the evenings we usually had a few drinks in a local pub, always ending in pleasant talks on our hobby with the regular customers, like here in Larne. The Irish whisky, Guinness beer and the Dutch cheese were to everybody's liking.**



The next day we went to Donaghadee. Here we were to meet Marc McCullough, who is quite a famous breeder of Modern English Game bantams. His bantams are world famous. Marc—still single and living with his parents—has lots of space. His father has served for years on a large estate, and they still live in a staff house on the property.



**Below, left to right: Marc McCullough, Hubert Grondorf, Christoph Mooren, Dieter Ruppel and me.**



**Above: Marc McCullough, one of the most famous Modern English Game bantam breeders, lives in Donaghadee, Northern Ireland.**

**Right: Marc's father also keeps White Wyandottes.**







**Above: Marc keeps most of the bantams in small coops, all situated on the large lawn. This is a coop of Birchen bantams.**

**Right: This Birchen hen shows a fine, dark face with a dark eye to match. Also the silver lacing is of high quality. In the background you can see more coops.**



**Left: Here I am standing next to some of the larger coops.**



**Above: A Silver Blue Modern English bantam hen. For such a rare colour, this is a top bird. Nice even blue with fine silver lacing.**



**Left: It was fun to discuss the birds with the German breeders, as we (Dutchmen) sometimes have a slightly different view on the Modern English Game bantam.**





Left: A Black Red cockerel. Fine body. Upstanding and active. Shoulders prominent and carried well up, with short, strong wings and balanced legs.



Left: Talking about 'type and stance'... This hen was picked up from the coop and just like that put in front of the camera. And can she pose! Although the legs should not be too straight, we want a little bend in the legs.

Right: An old Black Red cock of Marc McCullough—a very nicely balanced bird. Perfect shoulders and tail carriage.



Left: A Black Red cockerel, also straight from the pen. It is striking how tame Marc's birds are and how easily they stand in the required show stance. Only one slight remark: The bird is probably a bit over-trained showing too much 'lift' and its legs are too straight. Also the back toes don't touch the ground. Nevertheless this cockerel was very appealing to me.

Right: Another Black Red cock, ready to pose.

Top Right: A Birchen hen with very good colour and lacing—she would certainly score highly at Dutch shows.







**Left: A Lemon Blue cock. Of lesser quality than the Black Reds, this is a rare colour variety that is only bred by a small number of fanciers. The purplish face was striking.**

After visiting Marc, we went back to the Shaw family. Here, most chickens were housed in a very large attic Austin Shaw is a farmer and is widely known for his Texel sheep. He has also a large number of beef cattle. We were presented with the Old English Game was great class. I was really impressed.

**Right:  
Apart from  
the Old**

**English Game bantams Austin Shaw is also known as a breeder/exhibitor of Texel sheep. Here are some of his flock in the stable at Larne, Northern Ireland.**



**Above: Over his cattle shed Austin Shaw has a large attic where his Old English gamefowl/bantams are housed in spacious cages to prepare them for the shows.**

**Right: The many prizes (rosettes) that he has won, have found a place here.**







Left: Two Furness hens. The head and neck are all black to black tinged with brass. The breast is light brassy salmon and the stern is brassy. The remainder is chocolate to chocolatey black.



Right: A pair of Blacks. In England there are no hard and fast rules for eye and leg colour, unless it is clearly out of harmony with the main colour of the bird. In the Netherlands one is often too critical on that subject. Time to tune to the Standard of the country of origin! The birds in this photo show the wanted type and stance. Pity the cock has miscoloured primaries.

Left: A pile hen, she was Class Winner at the Carlisle Show.



Below: This partridge hen is another of Austin's top birds. She was very appealing to me.



Left: Austin Shaw, daily engaged in agriculture, took all the time to answer our many questions.





Left: Apart from the bantams, Austin also has several Large Old English Game, of the Carlisle type. He showed us a cock that met high demands.



Above right: A furness (brassy black) bantam cockerel. A very typical bird with ideal overall shape and muscular thighs. The dubbed comb and wattles do enhance the appearance of the bird. (Dubbing is not allowed in Europe.)



Above left: A Silver Partridge large Old English Game hen with outstanding shoulders and wing carriage.

Above right: Austin Shaw shows us a Brown Red Old English bantam. Same as in Holland, this colour variety is also rare in England.

After having admired the animals we were invited to enjoy dinner with the family. Our last evening in Ireland was again spent in the stylish setting of an Irish pub.



**Right: Here I am holding a Birchen bantam hen.**

However we could not stay late, as the our travel back home was planned for the next day and the ferry was booked. Monday morning we called on the Shaw family again, to fetch a few birds that would travel with us to the mainland.

**Below: To us, England is always very hospitable. Not just the people, but as you can see, also this Springer Spaniel. The term 'springer' comes from their historic hunting role, where the dogs would 'spring' or 'flush' birds into the air.**



Eventually we managed to catch the 9.30 pm ferry to England and in spite of the late hour, we succeeded in finding a Bed & Breakfast in Ashford.

Tuesday was the Dover-Calais crossing and finally I was back home at about 9 pm. Many miles travelled; many photos and many experiences richer. All-in-all it was a wonderful trip that will linger in my memory for many years to come.