



# Lorton Vale Squirrel Survey 2018



“Almost **1 in 5** of British mammal species face a high **risk of extinction**, according to the 1<sup>st</sup> comprehensive review of their populations for more than 20 years launched today (13<sup>th</sup> June 2018) by **The Mammal Society and Natural England**”\*\*

*‘The **red squirrel**, wildcat and the grey long-eared bat are all listed as facing severe threats to their survival...’*

**Breaking news!!**



**SOS  
Save Our Squirrels**



\*\* <http://www.mammal.org.uk/2018/06/british-mammals-fight-for-survival/>

\*\* <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/science-environment-44461150> Images: Rosamund & John Macfarlane



# Lorton Vale Squirrel Survey 2018



- **Background:** There is a general feeling that sightings of Red Squirrels are gradually reducing in Lorton Valley over the last few years, at a time of increasing reports of Grey Squirrels. This is in spite of the efforts of many local people to feed and protect Reds, and the hard work of dedicated volunteers from local Red Squirrel charities to control Grey ingress.
- **Survey:** A community squirrel survey was planned, with help from Steve Tyson and Peter Armstrong of the *West Lakes Squirrel Initiative*, to obtain a snapshot of current squirrel activity in the valley from *Lorton* in the north, to *Hopebeck* in the 'east', *Loweswater* and *Mockerkin* in the west and *Buttermere* in the south.
- **Lorton Vale Squirrel Survey (LVSS) Group:** Following a request in the **LINK** monthly valley newspaper in April, numerous local people (see list at end) kindly volunteered to record Red and Grey Squirrel sightings, using detailed report forms, during a specified week in both mid April and mid May 2018, and return both sightings and also null reports to the co-ordinator. One sighting was defined as "*an episode when you watch one individual squirrel until you lose sight of it*".
- The LVSSG members were also asked to recall how Red and Grey Squirrel visits to their property had changed over the last 3 years.
- **This report** has been prepared by John Macfarlane ([jtmacfarlane@gmail.com](mailto:jtmacfarlane@gmail.com)) for the LVSS Group.



# Lorton Vale Squirrel Survey 2018 -Results



**The results** are presented in the following 4 pages of figures, and a page of comments and acknowledgements...

**Page 3** A map with an indication of the number of survey reports received from the various geographical areas of Lorton Vale. Most LVSS Group member returned two reports/forms, one for April and one for May, including null reports. However some members completed only one form as they were away for one of the weeks, or only joined after the April week. In addition to these members, one or two individuals let me know of ad hoc individual sightings but did not do regular observations

**Page 4** A map showing RED SQUIRREL sightings

**Page 5** A map showing GREY SQUIRREL sightings

**Page 6** A figure exploring the change in frequency of Red Squirrel sightings since 2016

**Page 7** Comments, acknowledgments and source of further information

## LVSSG – 2018

Illustrative map of where the report forms were received from and how many



**Box:** Broad areas from where reports were received from LVSSG members.

**Figures:** Number of returns received from that area for both weeks (both null reports and squirrel sightings)

★ = Additional ad-hoc sightings received during the two separate weeks of the survey

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**LVSSG – 2018  
Red Squirrel  
Sightings**

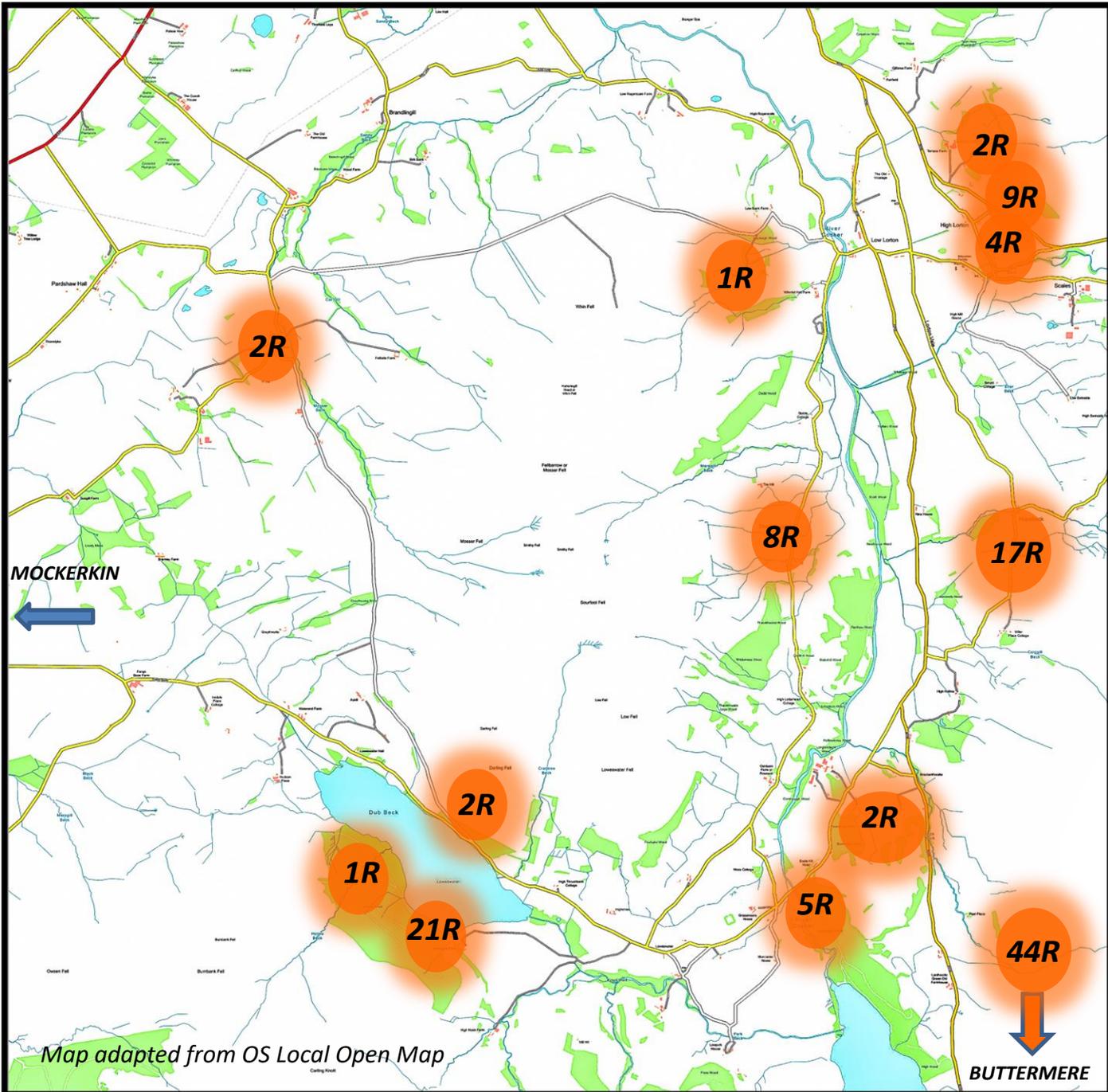
Red Squirrel sighting reports during one week in April and one week in May 2018 by LVSS Group members

Map showing approximate site and number of **RED SQUIRREL** sightings

○ Circles for demonstration -not to scale

**R = Number of Red Squirrel sightings.**  
[There were a total of 118 Red sightings]

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Map adapted from OS Local Open Map

# LVSSG – 2018 Grey Squirrel Sightings

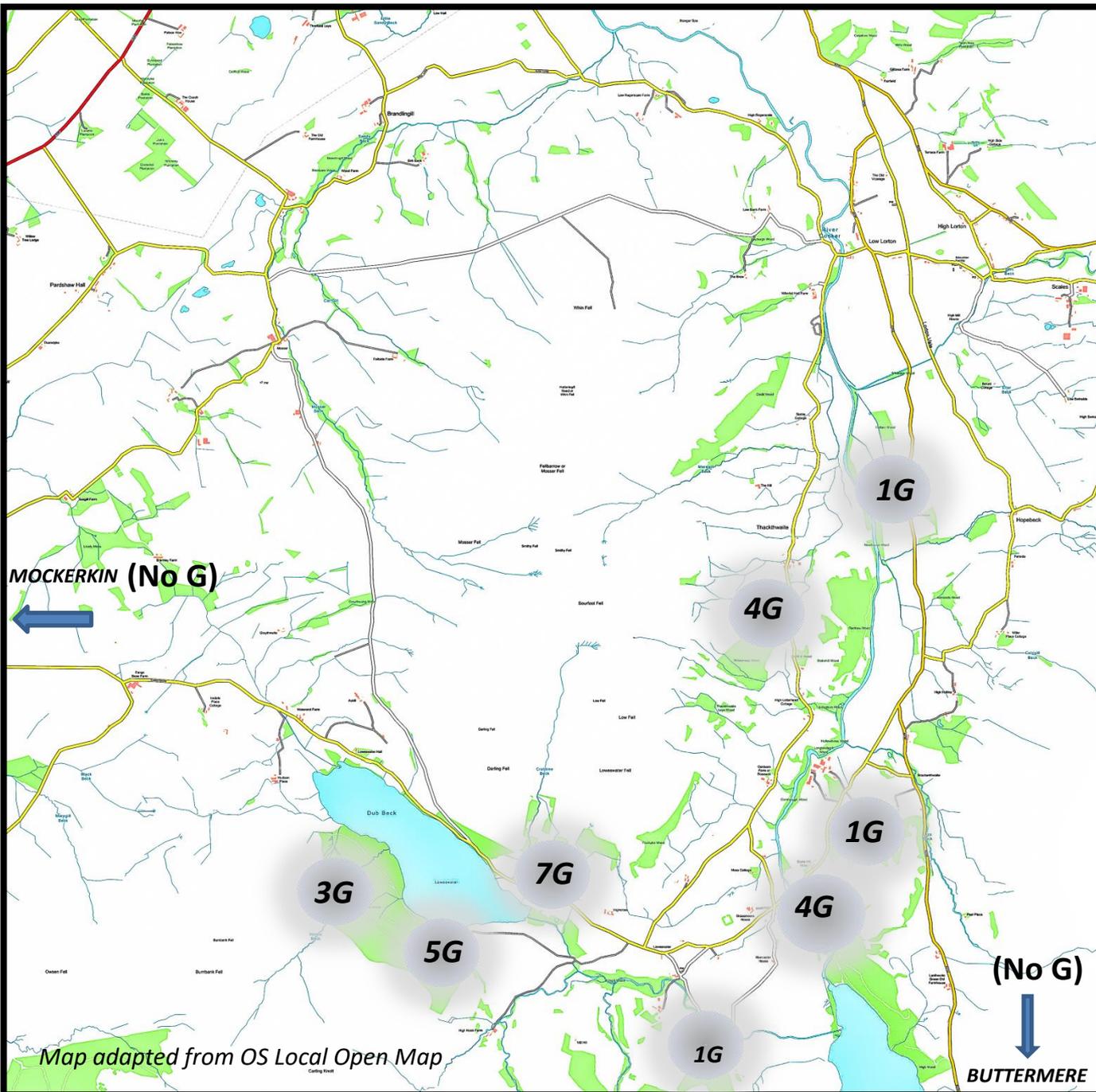
Grey Squirrel sightings during one week in April and one week in May 2018 by LVSS Group members

Map showing approximate site and number of **GREY SQUIRREL** sightings

 Circles for demonstration - not to scale

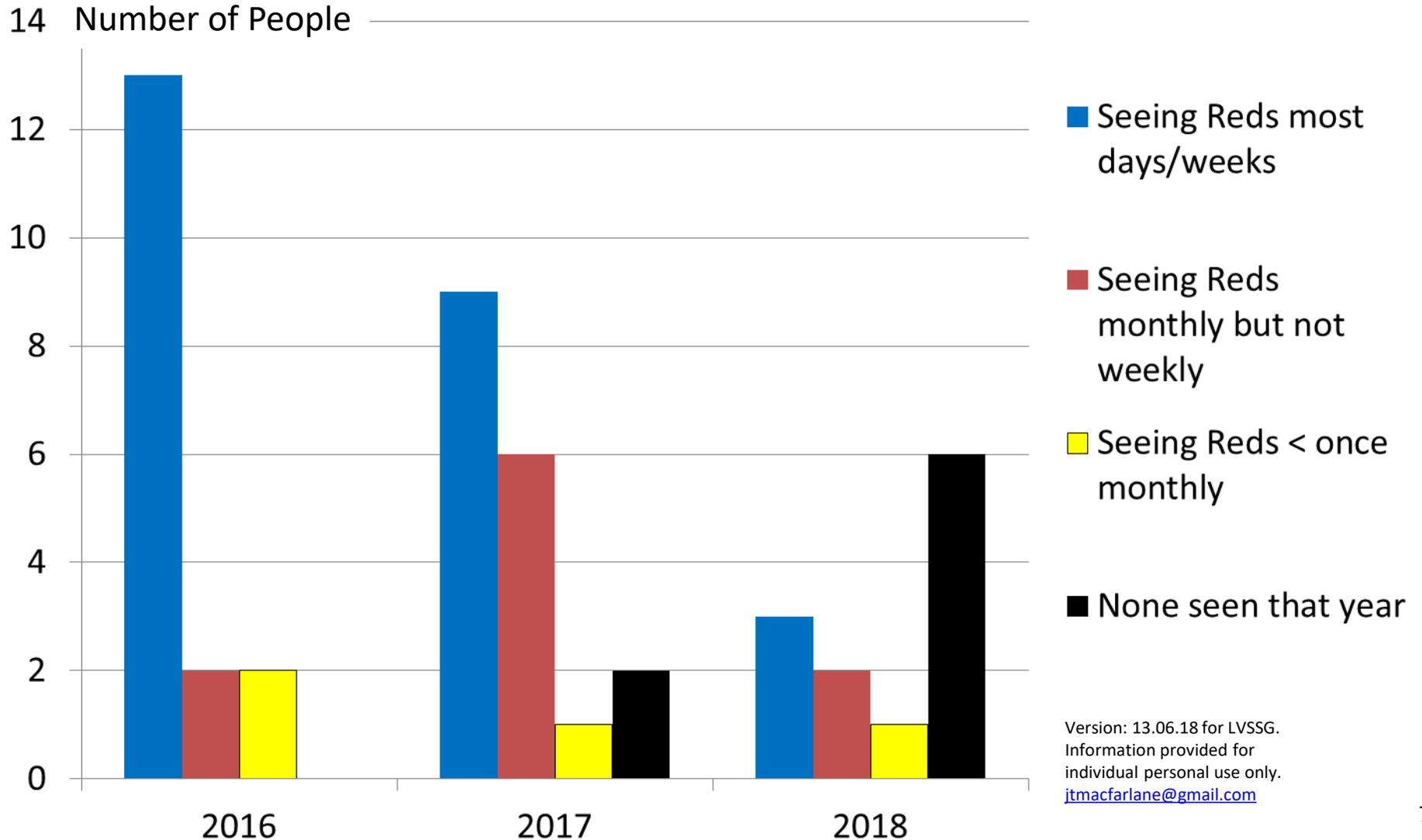
G = Number of GREY squirrel sightings.  
[There were a total of 26 Grey sightings]

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# Change in sightings of Red Squirrels between 2016 and 2018

Assessment by 17 local people from the Lorton Vale Squirrel Survey Group who reported seeing Red Squirrels around their property in 2016, and how the frequency of sightings had changed up to 2018 (June). [None had seen Grey Squirrels in 2016, but five had in 2017]





# Lorton Vale Squirrel Survey 2018



## Comments:

- This is a simple (and scientifically imperfect!) observational survey. Thus only broad brush comments can be made.
- **During the 2 week survey period there were 118 Red Squirrel and 26 Grey Squirrel sightings**
- Red Squirrels are still being seen in all parts of the valley.
- Comparing the number of sightings with the number of responses received, it appears that '**RED HOT SPOTS**' include: Buttermere, Hopebeck and Holme Wood , and also (higher parts of) High Lorton, Lanthwaite Wood and Thackthwaite.
- Frequency of **Red Squirrel** sightings have reduced markedly over the last 3 years
- **Grey Squirrels** are more in evidence since 2016.
- **Grey Squirrels** are mainly sighted in the Loweswater and Thackthwaite areas. None have been reported during the survey period in Lorton, Hopebeck, Buttermere or Mockerkin. (Since the survey finished one member has reported a Grey sighting in High Lorton).
- Efforts should be made to further encourage Red Squirrels in the Valley and to control Grey Squirrel ingress, both by action by local individuals and also by supporting our local Red Squirrel Groups.
- It would be interesting to repeat the survey in 2019.

**Survey returns and/or other sightings kindly provided by:** Peter Armstrong (West Lakes Squirrel Initiative), Mark Astley (National Trust), Elizabeth Birkett, Andy and Jenny Burr, Marion Burton, Janet and Roger Coles, Jan Collins-Webb, Paul Delaney (National Trust), Richard Easton, Lynette Furness, David Gardiner, David and Diane Hayton, Walter Head, Roger and Ann Hiley, Jane and Phil Holness, Alan Hudson, Judy Hudson, Richard and Yvette Kahane, Andrew Locking, John and Rosamund Macfarlane, Stuart Medland, Sandra Meier, Kathryn Mitchell, Sue Pexton, Christine Pledger, Chris Poate, Penny and Duncan Poole, Elly Rowland, Conrad and Susan Szamocki, Sue and David Segar, Robert Silverwood, Vicki and John Temple, Steve Tyson (West Lakes Squirrel Initiative), Joan Warren.

We are grateful to THE BIRDS' BISTRO of Penruddock for informing their local customers about the survey.

**Further information** about this survey and interesting information about Red and Grey Squirrels and local squirrel control activity, quizzes for children, and attractive local Red Squirrel cards and 2019 calendars will be available at the *WEST LAKES SQUIRREL INITIATIVE (WLSI)* stand at the Loweswater Show, on Sunday 2<sup>nd</sup> September 2018.