

The Universe Speaks

I sometimes get lost in my own dreamy world, a world in which I cannot open gates and sometimes I cannot even see them (Linda!). Being a little weird, as anyone who is much into animals, homeopathy and acupuncture probably is, I sometimes pick up messages from the Universe. Well, it's not that it sends me a text or anything like that, when the Universe "talks" it simply makes things happen. I think I have been having a long conversation with the Universe which lasted more than a year, and it still thinks it is right. The hot topic are my returns to Italy from the UK: I think it does not want me to go back and makes all sort of things happen.

July 2015

Newcastle Airport: Rossella gets sent to the WRONG gate and risks missing the flight to Paris...

Paris Charles de Gaulle Airport: Rossella lands and goes to security checks to board on an Alitalia's Flight to Milan. The security stops Rossella accusing her to be carrying explosives. Rossella's bags are emptied and she is fully scanned electronically, nothing is found. The airport security apologizes but they have caused a serious delay. When Rossella reaches her flight, gates are about to close, the Italians let her in but she gets a wonderful seat by the toilet at the end of the plane. Also, there is no room for her hand baggage anywhere as all the other Italians on board are travelling with style (many suitcases).



August 2016

Rossella, from now on known as “me”, is travelling by car so she expects everything to run more smoothly.

Lauder (Scottish Borders), August 11, next destination Harrogate (North Yorkshire) – The suitcase’s handle breaks down, it had lasted for years and underwent multiple moves. I fix it thanks to my braiding skills and I begin moving southwards

Harrogate (North Yorkshire), August 12, next destination Lower Halstow (Kent) – This journey was supposed to last about 4 hours, it took almost 8 and not because I was stopping to pee against every tree. More simply I got stuck in traffic and I moved southwards very slowly. In the meantime, there were almost no cars heading to “The North”... How come that on the Glorious 12 everyone goes south? I still can’t understand

Lower Halstow (Kent), August 13, next destination Folkstone (Kent) – Re-organizing my things I realized that my Italian sim (phone) card has disappeared. I placed it a safe place, I clearly remembered where, I checked but... it was gone. I have

no Idea of where it is now, I wish it could be somewhere nice on the moors. So... well, I had quite a panic attack realizing I no longer had an Italian phone number I could use while driving back home... and once at home!

Lower Halstow (Kent) August 14, next destination Folkestone (Kent) – It is eight something AM and my local British friends noticed something weird on my car. The windscreen gasket is now sitting on the car's roof. I have no idea of how it moved there but we managed fix it: the windscreen is fine, at least it seems so.

Folkestone (Kent), August 14, next destination Schwarzenberg (Switzerland) – 10 AM – My Eurotunnel train... is being Re-programmed... and it is late...

Somewhere in Nord Pas de Calais (France), August 14 – 1 PM – I am happily driving on a empty motorway when I hear something weird, I then see something weird. A black snake is bumping on my windscreen and there is no place I can stop the car, of course. I move to the right line (the one for slow vehicles on the Continent) until I find a "aire" (parking area): the windscreen gasket is out of place again, I take it away, end of the story...

Somewhere Alsace (France), August 14 – 5 PM – I am happy, I had a stop in Champagne to feed the car and got a chance to enter the service station with Briony. It was 29°C outside so I asked:

"Est ce-que le chien peut enter?" (Can the dog come in?)

"Est il petit?" (Is it a small dog?)

"Moyenne" (Medium)...

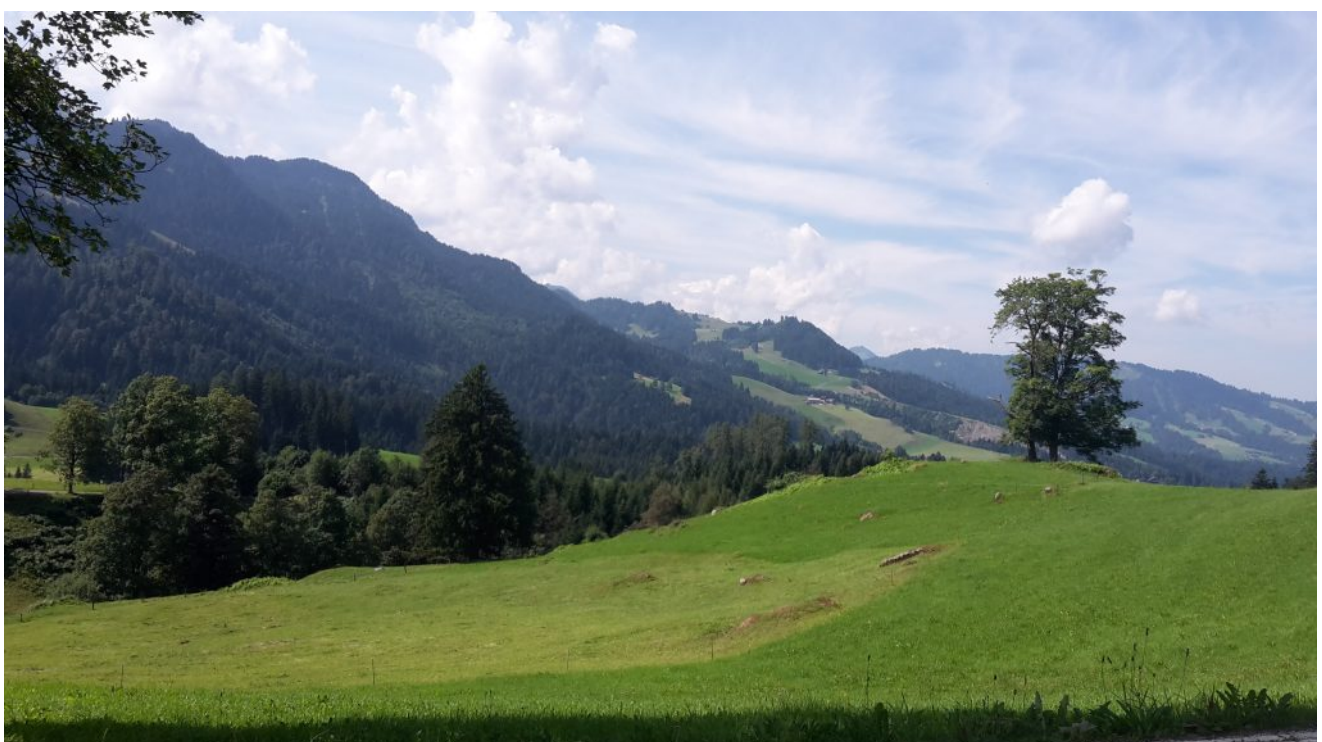
"Umm... ok!"...

So, I was happy to be back in dog friendly France when.... Wow, another noise, from the right side of the car (passenger seat

for us). Ohhh WOW the mirror! That's quite a long story. In July I was driving along a NARROW Yorkshire road and a truck hit my mirror. The driver was named Adam, he was young and cute indeed, but still he had broken my mirror and insisted I was in the middle of the road. It was early in the morning so everything could be, but I was driving at snail speed when his truck hit my mirror at full speed. So... Not sure to be the guilty one, but that could have been difficult to determine. The mirror needed a replacement, but I was moving from place to place it was impossible to order one, a mechanic fixed it and her (yes a she, I got a blonde female mechanic!) fix worked wonderfully until I tried to go back to Italy.

Deeming a bumpy mirror to be dangerous (if it had decided to "go" it could have killed some other drivers), I desperately started looking for a place to stop. When I finally found a service station, after miles at slow speed, there were no mechanics on duty so, classing myself as "smart" I wrapped it into a black rubbish bag and which was later blocked by the car's window. As soon as I started moving, some hair inflated the bag creating a cushion around the mirror.

Problem solved but Universe still setting roadblocks.



Schwarzenberg (Swiss Alps)

Schwarzenberg (Switzerland), August 14, next destination home (Italy) 9 PM– As soon as I stop the car, after a 12 hours drive and after having dealt with 4 languages in the last couple of hours, a wonderful Swiss “lady” runs towards me yelling that it was her private parking. She was about to call the police... Not sure they would have sent me back to Britain though. A couple of Swiss-Vikings-Like beings, though, came and rescued the tiny Italian.... Thank, thanks M. & F., that was an amazing rescue!

Switzerland & Italy, August 15– The Universe seems about to give up, the Milan bypass is empty (I love national holidays!), so the motorways, but I still can't find my Italian sim card. My chronic shoulder blade pain (never felt it in the UK), resurfaces at the last roundabout before home.

Italy, August 16 – After 2 hours spent visiting four shops, it seems I might have my Italian phone number back... and, sadly, I will soon have to say goodbye to my British one, if the Universe allows...



Waiting for the Italian phone number....

Goodbye Durham Co.

The car has been loaded (again!) and tomorrow will drive me to Reeth first and to Glenlivet second. I checked with the new B&B about three times and they are waiting for me, it will be a farm and I hope it will be as nice as this one. Why did I check three times? Because here in Woodland it happened that for one night, my room had been booked twice: once by me via e-mail and once by someone else through an Internet booking site! The problem was later solved but not without a panic attack!



Today I spent my last day in Durham Co. Happy days, wonderful landscape, nice people. I really enjoyed my stay at the local B&B and my time on the moor, either trialing, training, counting or simply taking pictures. I made friends with

“Barnard Castle” a small “town” which I deem to be too “crowded”. There I discovered that: 1) shops close at 5 PM or even earlier (In Italy they close at 7.30 PM with some supermarkets being open until 10 PM); 2) you must pay to park by the supermarket (Italian supermarkets offer free parkings to anybody, to attract you inside); 3) British People like figurines and other decorative items, there are many shops which sells this kind of stuff, in my country they will close down quick as people tend to have small houses and be obsessed with de-cluttering and house cleaning; 4) British people are proud of Britain, Italian people forget about Italy.



The sheep roaming freely which looked so weird to me last year are no longer noticed! They are just sheep by the road, nothing so interesting to look at. My way to Scotland will be a long way and, as much as I am happy and curious to go there, as much I am also sad to leave Durham Co. behind my shoulders. This place is heaven-like and I hope that those living here (or who can easily come here) realize how lucky they are! Still curious about British trials? Check the section A Month on the Moor or [click here](#).



On Italian humans in the Uk

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s, of course she is. I wrote a lot about Briony in the last article, so let's say a little about things seen through my eyes.

It took two days to reach Northern England. I drove through Switzerland (beautiful scenery but slow drivers and much traffic) and France, none around and very boring landscape. I drove to France the day after Nice's terrorist attack, all was very sad and silent. My hotel was fine at the first sight: extra large comfy bed but... we had a visitor in the room, it was a cockroach and, on the following day Briony was loaded with fleas! There were cats around the hotel so, let's blame them but it was not so nice, I to had to stop several times along the way to de-flea her and the car... I also locked myself out of the room for at least three times: not my fault, these doors were locking themselves by themselves and, if you forgot the little card inside the room (easy if you are unloading the car and have to be careful about the dog) you were out. I think the hotel employees did not like me much at that point.

I just mentioned the car: it sort of broke down the evening before I left: lucky the Suzuki mechanics fixed it past their working hours, but I came home at half past nine and I had to load the car in the darkness... Therefore I brought too many things with me, as I always do. But... well... last year I did not spot any supermarkets in the area so I sort of prepared myself as If I were going to spend a month in the wilderness, now I know there are supermarkets here... Anyway, I reached my destination pretty easily and I am driving around well, despite the fact these people drive on the wrong side of the road. I even managed to learn and recognize routes and places which sounds pretty good to me. I found a couple of grocery shops and I especially like Morrison's supermarket, they have a good choice of real foods. At the moment I am staying at a Bed & Breakfast in Woodland, Co. Durham, on a farm and I like it. People are friendly and helpful and Briony can roam freely around the house, interacting nicely with their dogs. I spent a night at the Black Bull Inn in Reeth which was fine but I did not like Reeth and I do better on bed and breakfast placed on farms.



I had a couple of problems with the car, but one was solved and the other one has been solved partially. The first one was quite peculiar: a dog trailer ahead of me moved a giant stone which went right underneath my car. Me and Maddy Raynor dug like moles underneath the car but we eventually had to find some other people to push it forward. The other problem is a broken left mirror, I think I might have to get a new one....(not my fault this time!).

What else, I am really enjoying the trials and the training sessions I had. It is really nice to be surrounded by helpful people and I was especially pleased to be allowed to go grouse counting three times. On a more mundane side I discovered charity shops. They are simply great if you are a bargain hunter! My wristwatch broke, but I got a stylish new (second hand) one for a ridiculous price and a wonderful pair of heather coloured trousers in size 6 (which means I lost weight!).

Last, but not least, the scenery is great and I like the

weather too (it keeps changing and it is always windy, but I like it). I also like to be surrounded by sheep, cattle, grouse and other wildlife. I hope the people living here realize how precious these things are. I shall grab some food now but I will try to keep you updated. Still curious about British trials? Check the section A Month on the Moor or [click here](#).

Briony ai field trials (Prima Settimana)

AVVERTENZA PER I LETTORI ITALIANI: questo articolo non sostituisce il testo inglese che potete trovare [qui](#), lo integra. Se conoscete l'inglese vi consiglio di leggere entrambi.

Comunque, come avrete capito, al momento mi trovo nel Nord dell'Inghilterra e partecipo a field trials (prove di lavoro) inglesi. Perché questa scelta? Perché lo scorso anno sono stata qui e ho assistito al Champion Stake rimanendo assolutamente affascinata dai luoghi, dai selvatici e dal tipo di addestramento a cui i cani vengono sottoposti. Il Champion Stake è la prova d'eccellenza ma, mediamente, si tende a ottenere quel livello di addestramento, una cosa da noi mai vista se non nel mondo del Deutsch Drahthaar addestrato alla tedesca: mi stupiva il fatto che anche i setter potesse raggiungere certi livelli. Disclaimer: non tutti i cani britannici sono perfetti ed impeccabili, ho assistito a dei discreti svarioni anche qui ma... la gente ce la mette davvero tutta per avere il cane a posto, a costo di ritirarlo da un'intero circuito di prove.

A quell'epoca Briony stava chiudendo il Campionato di Bellezza (Ch.It. B. Briony del Cavaldrossa) e stavo già pensando di intraprendere il campionato di lavoro: il viaggio in Inghilterra mi ha aperto nuove prospettive e mi ha reso più determinata. Non volendo cedere il cane ad un dresseur, il problema principale era trovare qualcuno che mi seguisse personalmente e che capisse cosa avevo in mente. L'ho trovato in un ex guardiacaccia (noto come lo Sciamano// Penna Bianca) che addestra cani da una vita: al momento si occupa principalmente di cani da traccia e di continentali mitteleuropei, ma durante la vita ha addestrato e posseduto una serie infinita di razze. Ho iniziato a lavorare con lui lo scorso settembre e abbiamo proseguito fino alla fine di gennaio: è stata dura, tanto lavoro di obbedienza, tanta corda lunga, tanto di tutto. Ho passato mesi a studiare ed addestrare e basta: mi ha vietato la stagione venatoria, o addestri o cacci mi ha detto, e abbiamo fatto anche questo sacrificio.



Con la chiusura della caccia, non ha più avuto terreni idonei per addestrare un setter così, tra forasacchi e divieti, mi sono dovuta arrangiare ripiegando su una zona C. Il gestore, Ezio, mi ha dato una mano e abbiamo continuato a lavorare, principalmente su quaglie. Nel mese di maggio Briony ha fatto un cambiamento radicale e ho pensato... Perché non competere in UK? Il tipo di addestramento intrapreso era molto simile, del resto. Così, mentre preparavo l'enorme esame di Semeiotica Medica Veterinaria, proseguivo con l'addestramento, trovando in Claudio, un vecchio amico che addestra draughta e kurzhaar da anni, un altro validissimo mentore. Il suo ruolo è stato più che altro quello di infondere fiducia e spingermi a fare passi avanti, senza paure.

Insieme alle gioie e al supporto di tanti (non posso nemmeno dimenticare il gruppo di lavoro "Amatori Draughta- Allevamento di Costa Rubea – con Bruno, Fabrizio, Gianluca e Monica), purtroppo, sono arrivate anche le difficoltà. Sembrava impossibile iscriversi a un trial: ogni gara ha un numero limitato di partecipanti, se lo supera i meno "meritevoli" (c'è una graduatoria particolare) vanno in lista d'attesa, in ordine di merito. Quindi, praticamente Briony sarebbe stata quasi sempre in fondo alla lista. Ho mandato i moduli di iscrizione comunque e ho sperato. La prima "carinaria" è arrivata da un club che ha rifiutato la nostra iscrizione dal momento che non potevo inviare un assegno in sterline. E ancora... altri erano preoccupati per il cane italiano (pensavano fosse un pazzo scatenato), dal momento che la nostra, intendo italiana, reputazione cinovatoria è quella che è.

Comunque, ho la testa dura, sono andata avanti e sono qui. Lo devo anche ai tanti che mi hanno aiutato con Briony negli anni (addestramento, uscite a caccia e in riserva eccetera... non li nomino ma loro si riconosceranno lo stesso!) . Anche in UK sto trovando splendide persone disposte ad aiutare: il giorno seguente al mio arrivo ero già fuori ad addestrare e a

partecipare ai censimenti (grazie Steve Robinson!) e poi sono iniziati i trials. Il primo è stato a Muggleswick, in Classe Novizi, organizzato dall'IGL (International Gundog League). Briony ha corso a meno di 24 ore dal suo primo incontro con le grouse, ottenendo di andare al richiamo... Poi ha pasticciato e siamo stati eliminate ma, arrivare ai richiami con un cane preparato in Italia... su quaglie... mi soddisfa moltissimo. Il secondo giorno seguente, essendosi ritirati alcuni concorrenti, l'IGL ci ha permesso di correre in Classe Libera, insieme a cani famosi (il compagno di coppia era un Campione di Lavoro): fuori per un trascurato e vi assicuro che data la densità di grouse è facilissimo dimenticarne una, ma bel turno. Il mercoledì ci siamo spostate a Eggleston, per la Speciale Setter Inglesi. Sul menù trascurato (?) e non perfetta immobilità (si è voltata e ha mosso i piedi anteriori— da noi non ci avrebbe fatto caso nessuno) sullo sparo del compagno di coppia. Giovedì, di nuovo a Eggleston imbucate in Classe Libera. Turno splendido, bella ferma, bella guidata e... di nuovo muove i piedini... Fuori. Le giudici ci chiedono di "clear the ground" e Briony lavora un'altra decina di grouse, un paio a singolo e le altre in covata. Tecnicamente è ferma al frullo ma si dimena con tutto il corpo. Le giudici mi spiegano che in Classe Libera il cane deve essere praticamente immobile. Però... dimenii a parte, io sono soddisfatta: non ho mai addestrato per il dimenio, non sapevo, ora lo so. Oggi abbiamo corso di nuovo in libera alla prova del Club del Gordon Setter, eliminate nel minuto credo (non esiste qui il minuto) a causa di una guidata poco fluida/troppo ferma in ferma...

Comunque, fino a qui, imprecisioni e sfortune a parte si è comportata bene e sono davvero contenta dal momento che l'ho preparata su selvatici e terreni molto diversi da quelli che sta affrontando.



Qualcuno pensa che io sia a fare prove in Inghilterra perché sono più facili: non è vero. Sono diverse, ma non più facili. La tanta selvaggina (anche tanti conigli) richiede grande correttezza e obbedienza, per questo i giudici sono pignoli sui dettagli: da noi c'è più attenzione alle qualità naturali del cane probabilmente. Qui puoi avere anche il miglior cane del mondo ma se non hai l'obbedienza non vai da nessuna parte. La cerca non deve essere ristretta ma ragionevolmente ampia, e velocità, aperture e stile sono tenute in gran conto ma... non si chiedono eccessi, sarebbero solo controproducenti su questi terreni.

Altre differenze, non puoi toccare il cane o sei eliminato: in guidata il cane non lo tocchi, deve guidare da solo e a comando, la correttezza al frullo e allo sparo è fondamentale, non puoi guinzagliare fino a che il giudice non lo permette (e può passare del tempo), ti possono chiedere di fermare il cane in ogni momento e via dicendo. Generalmente le cose vanno così: i cani fanno un primo turno e i soggetti meritevoli

fanno un secondo turno, eventualmente un terzo. Come potete capire... le probabilità di essere eliminati aumentano. In ogni prova a fronte di un massimo di 40 concorrenti per batteria, sono assegnati solo i primi 4 posti e eventuali Certificati di Merito.



Il professionismo è una realtà sconosciuta: ci sono bravi addestratori che addestrano e portano cani di altri ma si tratta di pochi numeri/piccole cose. Di fatto non esistono furgoni e l'unico con tanti cani altrui al seguito è un eccentrico irlandese (Alan O'Neil) che viaggia con una macchina e un trailer da cavalli perfettamente addestrati: può lasciarli liberi e aperti per ore e non si allontanano dal punto in cui ha detto loro di stare! Fenomenale, lo seguono come un branco seguirebbe il capobranco. Per il resto, qualche allevatore ha un po' di cani al seguito ma nulla di paragonabile alla nostra realtà. Moltissimi cani sono condotti dai proprietari (donne e uomini in pari numero) e sono condotti egregiamente.

I censimenti di grouse sono un momento importante per preparare il cane: sono riuscita a frequentarne altri due presso la riserva di Eggleston grazie a Therry Harris e... parleremo anche di questi, come si svolgono eccetera, eccetera

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The adventures of Miss Briony in the moorlands (Week 1)

I am writing in English as I get messages from people from all over the world asking me questions, an Italian version might follow.

Well, I finally have a moment to write down what I experienced during last week. I reached the UK (after a long trip through Switzerland and France) only seven days ago, and so many things have already happened. First of all I AM HERE! There had been moments and happenings during which I felt almost sure this dream of mine was going to remain... Just a dream.

Let's go back to what happened last year. In July 2015, I came to the UK to watch the Champion Stake. I liked everything I experienced here and I was especially impressed by the dogs' training level. I liked the way the dogs were trained and how this kind of training allowed them to produce nice performances. Italians are believed to have great English Setters, great English Pointers and great field trials: this is true, in some ways, and false in some other ways, at least in my very humble opinion! I recognize the strenght of our trials and of our breeding choices, but I perceive the UK FT trials to be more suitable to my mindset. Also, our English Setters are trained differently (let's say they are sort of

wilder) and I have never thought that a dog belonging to this breed could be trained to such high obedience standards.



At that time Briony was finishing her Show Championship (her full name is IT. Ch. Briony del Cavaldrossa) and I was already planning to train her for Field Trials in the hope of having a Dual Ch. She comes from a working bloodline, she had been my personal rough shooting dog since she was about 7 months old and she had proved me (and other people, including judges who shoot over her) to have all a dog needs to compete in Italian field trials. However, things were not so easy: I knew I could train a dog to be a rough shooting dog, but I was aware I was lacking the skills needed to train a dog for field trials. Once again, Italy is different from the UK: most of the dogs running at trials are prepared and handled by professional handlers/trainers and the dog needs to live with them at their kennels. I knew I was not going to give "Princess Briony", who sleeps on the couch, to anyone and that I wanted to learn how to train her.

So... the quest for a good trainer began and, as happened in the past, with my very first English Setter, the smart great people willing to help me were the Deutsch Drahthaar (GWP) people: they are so keen on obedience that they were just what I needed. The first part of the training, from Sept 2015 until Spring 2016, was done under the supervision of a retired gamekeeper known as "the shaman" or "white feather". He now owns a drahthaar but he used to own an English Pointer and had trained hundreds of dogs belonging to different breeds (he is much into deer tracking dogs at the moment!) to the highest levels. He worked with us for months, asking absolutely no money while teaching us so much... I am not sure I will ever be able to thank him enough. After the shooting season ended, however, he no longer had access to any grounds suitable to train an English Setter and I had to rely on a tiny piece of ground an estate and its gamekeeper offered me. This gamekeeper (who goes under the name of Ezio) did his best to help, but I felt I was still needing some supervision. To my surprise, Briony began improving very quickly, and at this point I started thinking I could maybe trial her in the UK. It was May when unexpectedly my friend Claudio (who trains GWPs and GSP's professionally) stepped in. I think he was so intrigued by my plans, that he really did his best to help us, especially scolding me each time I did not feel good enough as a trainer/handler. So well... Thanks to you all: White Feather, Ezio, Claudio, the GWP training group Amatori Drahthaar (Fabrizio, Bruno, Monica, Gianluca...) and all the people who, in the years, allowed me great opportunities to go shooting with Briony on private (expensive!) estates and to those who took me snipe shooting and woodcock shooting. No

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June came and, after I passed a HUGE university exam (besides being a freelance journalist, I am studying Veterinary Medicine), I began to apply to some of the English trials. Things got a little complicated at this point: a club refused my entry as I could not send a check in sterlings, other clubs had all their trials oversubscribed (In Italy if you get more dogs than you expect to get you simply set up another stake and call more judges); this was all new to me, also some people seemed concerned about the “Italian dog” (I think Italian dogs are believed to be a little wild!). It was not easy, and If I am here now I owe it to my STUBBORNES, not a quality I wish I had, but a quality that can be helpful sometimes. The Scots were great too: as their trials were not oversubscribed they happily accepted us.

We eventually arrived on June 16th and on the following day we were already on the moor with Mr. Steve Robinson. He kindly offered to introduce Briony to grouse and, on that morning, we went counting grouse at Muggleswick Estate. I was really happy

to go and see the counting, as I was really curious to witness this activity. The fact I could be there with my dog (at the beginning she was on lead) was simply amazing! In the afternoon we moved to another ground where we meet other people (Terry Harris, Roy Heath, Maria Jaques, John Naylor and probably someone else I forgot) who really did their best to help us and make us feel "at home".



On the following morning Briony had her first trial, the IGL Novice Stake and I think she did well as we were given a second round! On Tuesday the organizers let her enter the Open Stake and, well we were out because she "missed" a grouse but I liked how she behaved. Things went ok at the English Setter Club trials in Muggleswick where she ran in the Breed Stake on the first and in the Open Stake (they kindly accepted me) on the following day. On the second day she was shot over after she produced the bird, but we were eliminated because, despite not moving forward... she sort of moved her whole body in every other directions!!! But it was fun and it was fine as we both need to gain experience and refine our skills.

Later in the week we given again the opportunity to go counting/training again with Therry Harris and other people on Eggleston Moor, this sounds like such a privilege to me.

We will see what happens next. This article is mostly about Briony and the trials but I might later write something else on daily life here, stones which run under my car, far away pubs and anti-flea sprays to thank all those involved. I am grateful for all this! (Ps. I love grouse!) Still curious about British trials? Check the section A Month on the Moor or [click here](#).