

Entering a trial Italy vs UK

part II: UK

After discussing Italy [here](#), what about the [United Kingdom](#)? How do you enter a trial? First of all, if you do not live in the UK and your dog is not registered with their Kennel Club, you have to go through the Kennel Club website and fill out an application form to get an ATC (Authorization to Compete) number. You can choose between two options: getting an ATC number alone; getting an ATC number and register your dog microchip number at [Petlog](#). This second option is more expensive, but worth: if your dog get lost, having his microchip been registered in the Petlog database, would make a reunion easier. Once you have an ATC number, you can formally enter the dog in trials. Warning: the whole procedure might take up to three weeks.

I do not know how things work for HPRs (Continental Pointing Dogs, but trials for British Pointing Breeds take place only during specific times of the year. There are two weeks on grouse in March; one week on partridge in April; almost a month on grouse (mid July/mid August) and, finally one more week on partridge in September. The total number of trials is therefore extremely limited, if compared to the number of trials taking place in Italy during a year (hundreds!) and makes getting a run quite complicated. With the calendar at hand, you have to find the contacts of the club organizing each trial, get a specific entry form, fill it out and return it to the club secretary before the deadline, together with the entry fees. The most complicated thing, for those abroad, is paying the fees in advance. All the clubs accept cheques but it is impossible to send a cheque in sterling from abroad, which makes things complicated for a foreigner. Some clubs accept foreigners to wire money through a bank, others are ok



with you paying at the venue...

In the form you have to fill out you have to write the dog's name and date of birth; his/her parents names; the breeder, the owner and the handler names and so on. You should not forget the breed and whether he has already gained any awards in British trials as this would allow him to enter the Open stake more easily. British trials have three option when it comes to stakes: Puppy; Novice and Open. Puppy Stakes are for dogs younger than 2 years who had never qualified; Novice Stake is for dogs of every age who have never won a 1st or 2nd place in a Novice Stake (or Puppy Stake) and Open Stakes are for those who did! To become a Field Trial Champion, a dog must win two Open Stakes. Field trial rules remain the same regardless of the stake, but judges can be "kinder" towards dogs who run in Puppy and Novice Stakes. Is it difficult for a foreign dog to enter a trial and, more specifically, run in an Open Stake? I think it depends on the trial and on the time of the year: whilst Open Stakes are Open to all dogs, the dogs who had qualified 1st or 2nd in Novice and Puppy Stakes are allowed to run only in Open, hence are given priority. Trials run in Northern Scotland are usually less crowded that those run in England and, I was told, March Trials are less popular. Are Puppy and Novice Stakes easier to get in? My experience is extremely limited, but I think they are. What we shall remember is that stakes usually accommodate a maximum of 40 dogs (and each trial has ONLY one stake, not three, four or more like in Italy), and the extra dogs become "reserves" (= they are placed on a waiting list). Reserves that cannot get a run will get their money back. Being member of the club

organizing the trial and having had placements in the past proved more chances to get a run.

Still curious about British trials? Check the section A Month on the Moor or [click here](#).

Finding Diamonds in the Marsh: Snipe Field Trials

I have a thing for snipe and I cannot help it. Yes, I do love grouse probably more, but snipe is not too bad and help me to cope with absence of the first one. Snipe and I are very old and very good friends: we met, by chance, in 2004, the same year I got my first shooting license. To make the long story short, books and hunters' tales made me aware of snipe existence, but I had never spotted any of these tiny waders until Spina, an English Setter, pointed one. I was so fascinated by her work that I decided I liked snipe. Not all dogs point snipe, not all dogs like them: snipe live in uncomfortable places, such as rice paddies and marshes. More specifically, local snipe live in rice paddies inundated by water, the muddier the better. It is not easy to run on these grounds and weather conditions tend to be equally unfriendly to dogs. Autumn and winter here are notorious for fog, rain, dampness and absence of wind. A dog must really like snipe to go looking for them and he also needs to possess great stamina and prey drive: snipe are scarce and the dog is likely to end up running for hours on "empty" and unfriendly grounds. Furthermore, if the dog is lucky enough to find one, the bird might still be able to outsmart the mammal and fly away before the four legged creature has a chance to point.



Cuore

Snipe are nervous, fast, light and incredibly tricky creatures but, needless to say, a few brave handlers dare to enter their dogs in snipe field trials. Trials that, given the bird itself, are different to from any other trials. They are believed to be for “specialists” only. Rules and judging standards make them special, British Pointing dogs, for instance, run “solo”, without a bracemate, something which is not normally allowed. Why do they run alone? Because, otherwise, it will be even more unlikely to work a bird properly. Judges want the dogs to be fast and run wide while exactly the where the birds are. They speak of “snipe sense”: the dog is supposed to quarter nicely in the wind and find a bird effortlessly during his 15 minutes run. This is not easy: dogs who trot around acting suspicious and proving unable to discern between scent and snipe, hence exhibiting many false points, are not appreciated. The dog must look decisive, run, locate and point, there is not usually any roading, due to snipe being extremely eager to fly, sometimes too much. You can't have two dogs running at full speed in the same rice paddy, snipe, if present, would explode like landmines! Also, you can't whistle much, you can't talk, you have to be extremely careful when closing your car's door, make too much noise and you will end up running on snipe ghosts.... Oh... I was forgetting jack snipe, a critter meant to further complicate things.

What I just wrote is clearly enough to re-direct handlers somewhere else, provided they are wise. I have always

considered snipe trials to be the Olympus and dreamt about them like normal women dream about holidays on a tropical island. I like snipe, Briony likes snipe, we live in (ghost) snipe land, yet my autumn trial plans were about ordinary birds, such as pheasant and partridge. My smart planning, however, lasted until my stake at "normal" trial was suddenly cancelled, two days before it was supposed to take place.

Disappointed, I went online to check for other nearby trials taking place during that weekend, snipe were the only option. I picked up the phone and spoke directly to the [Snipe Club](#) (yes we have a snipe club!) president who referred me to the secretary. Surprise! I knew the secretary well: he entered me in his trial right away.



Blus

On the morning of the trial, when I reached the venue, I felt quite intimidated. Everybody looked tremendously professional: there were snipe stickers and snipe patches everywhere. People were wearing waders and everybody was, or at least professionally pretended to be, professional. Once on the ground things continued to be the same: people blew talcum powder in every directions to assess the wind (there was no wind indeed & I had no talcum powder); people were being picky about the grounds and so on. The Snipe Club asked me to take pictures for them, which allowed me to follow the stake closely. What I saw during that trial did not impress me: some dogs (including mine) had to be casted on empty and dry grounds, others had more luck and got a run on wet paddies

with plenty of snipe but could not handle them properly. We had blank points, dogs bumping into birds, dogs chasing and so on. But, while dogwork did not fascinate me, people did: everybody was kind, supportive and friendly. Well, they became like this after they had studied me for a couple of hours: they initially thought I was there “just” to take pictures and they could not match me with the dog. Those men thought the dog was there “just” to watch and that she was too pretty and too white to compete. When they finally accepted the fact that she was going to run... they expected someone else (male) to handle her. I do not know where the supposed male could have been located, as my car contained no human beings besides me, it might be they thought he was going to arrive just in time for her run. Seeing me walking straight into the trialing ground with the dog on lead, thus signalling I was the handler, generated quite a silence and put us under unwanted spotlights. We had an awful ground: stream on the left, railway in front, tractor on the right and no water under the stubble. Briony worked nicely in the wind and explored the ground with method, but unfortunately there were no snipe waiting for her. Her good behaviour, nevertheless, erased suspicions: in the beholders’ eyes I suddenly became a good handler, silence ceased and people stepped towards me to congratulate and ask questions. It was fun! Someone asked if I trained her by myself; which was her bloodline; whether I intended to continue trialing her and so on: good feelings.



Us

At the end of the day, I was confused and unsure whether to continue trialling on snipe or not but, by the end of the week, I had made my mind up and Mauro, the secretary, as promised, had saved a place for me. This time, at the venue, I had several new “friends” who happily welcomed me and made me feel part of the pack or, rather, more like their family pet. The snipe club itself self decided to adopt me as their “photographer” and it became a routine, for the handlers, trying to look good in pictures. I ended up taking 5 of the 10 (?) field trials that compose the autumn snipe trial circuit, and this is what happened. Out of five trials Briony had the occasion to properly work snipe only twice: on the first occasion, she scented it and started roading along the scent but, in the same instant she was about to stop and point, the snipe flew by itself so we were out. The second time, instead, she made a mistake and she missed the bird. We did not meet any other snipe until the last trial, which was run in a monsoon like setting that forced snipe to be light and fly by themselves miles ahead of dogs. I was forgetting about trial number four in which she pointed a pheasant: it was the only bird she could find, yet it was not a valid point. The dog who ran after her was equally unlucky, finding the only hare every spotted in that county! Me & Briony did not have a chance to be graded during those five trials, but all the judges encouraged us to keep trialling (or I would have saved my money!) and she was once mentioned – a little achievement for us – during the award giving ceremony: judges here are allowed to talk about that nice dog who was doing so well but could not be graded due to bad luck, or to minor mistakes.



Him!!! (Oldrado)

On the average, during a trial, only 20% of the dogs had a chance to meet snipe, this might not sound fair but snipe cannot be “planted” and you have to deal with the scarce birds you have. Or, maybe, you can try to purchase a huge amount of luck in advance. In my case, it never seemed to fit in the shopping cart but, I have to admit, that my fellow competitors have often behaved like gentlemen, trying to provide me with promising grounds and some little extra hints. It is usually easier to find snipe if you know the grounds, yet they can still surprise you!

So, are snipe trials as difficult as they are rumored to be? I think so: birds are scarce, wary (& wiry) and deeply influenced by weather conditions. Snipe are diamonds and, like diamonds, are little and not easy to find, but they are shining, so if you are careful enough you might find one! We ran the first trial on a damp, windless warm day; the subsequent ones were all run in misty and windless cold mornings, all but for the last one during which we finally had some wind... accompanied by a torrential rain! Pointing snipe without wind is not easy, and these conditions also hardened the judge's job as dark skies and mist made more difficult to see everything and correctly discern between mistakes made on snipe (which lead to an elimination) and on jack snipe (the dog can miss them). What about the handlers? As it happens in other trials, you get all sort of handlers: some had perfectly trained dogs and some dogs had wilder specimen who liked to chase, bump into birds and run away, tendencies that sometimes

prevented them to be graded but, did I see any good dogs? Yes, I think so, and I must admit that, even if English Setters were the most represented breed, I also saw good dogs who were not English Setters! Among them I have to mention a couple of Irish Setters (they were not graded), a flashy pointer (he was not graded either) and a wonderful Gordon Setter: I am hardly enthusiastic about Gordons but this one was truly impressive! So... am I going to be back in spring? Maybe...

Ten years ago, a nice dinner by Angelo Cammi

English abstract

[To read full article in Italian click here.](#)

Angelo Cammi is a well respected British Pointing dogs judge and an English Setter lover. He is president of the Piacenza Chapter of the Italian Setter Society (SIS Piacenza).

This article was given to all those who were present at the Piacenza English Setter Specialty trial on wild birds (selvaggina natural), last summer. It is a very important article as it points out what happened, and what did not happen, during the last 10 years. Cammi wrote the article in Italian and intended it to be read by Italians but, we have to remember that people from all over Europe are interested in Italian English Setters. It is therefore important that they could receive valuable information as well. I am not going to translate the whole article (you can use google translate), but I (Rossella) am going to summarize the first part and then translate the last paragraphs.

The first part of the article is about a dinner. Some setter people are eating a pizza and discussing relevant topics for the breed, it was the year 2006. The issues discussed were: 1) Zone Doc; 2) Derby (and a Derby for females); 3) Grey Partridge; 4) Training Grounds. Note for foreigners:

- The Zone Doc were/are ENCI approved field trial grounds. The plan was to have special trialing grounds on which birds were absolutely wild and natural. Among the first selected areas there were natural preserves, parks and so...
- The Derby is a trial mimicking grand quete and reserved to dogs who: 1) are under 3 years old,; 2) were born in Italy and 3) had never been trialed before. The Derby is run solo.
- Grey Partridge... well... these birds seemed/seem to be sort of extinct in nature but, being valuable birds for dog trialing, Italians dream/wish/hope to have them back.
- Training grounds: they do not exists but for some B and C selected areas, which are extremely small and limited. To train a dog you basically have to act like a poacher for most part of the year. Why? We do not know and the question was/is... how can this change?

These were the topics discussed over dinner by Cammi and his fellow settermen... what happened 10 years later? This is the second part of the article:

- The plan to set up Zone DOC did not work. All trialing grounds now are Zone DOC and more and more grounds became DOC, including private estates (in which birds are not always wild and natural). Why?
- Derby for females? We currently do not have any.
- Training grounds? Nothing has changed.



Hammer owned by Del Borghi

CAMMI'S THOUGHTS (full translation)

Anything else to consider? Yes, many things. At the Derby 2016 we had 170 entries and 4 awards (about 2%). Yes, what matters is genetic selection, breeding... but year after year we have less and less awards. Of course we have many working champions, many famous trailers but? Something is obviously not working even when we celebrate dogs winning "important" (so defined) competitions, competitions that are, indeed, spectacular but concreteness is a different thing and working standards and trial rules are focused on it. Basically the technically acclaimed "selective breeding" is giving birth to specimen that are getting more and more different to a real pointing dog. The judge's evaluations we read say: ***"Performance suitable to the kind of trial, typical gallop, does not meet birds. Excellent gallop, asked to run a second round bumps into birds"***. An endless number of evaluations look like this one so? What are we selecting for?

CAMMI's COMMENTS (full translation)

Some ideas and some declaration are born randomly (and with some self-reference) especially when they are apt to find populist consensus but nothing comes after, at least not yet.

I do not want to be polemic, polemics do not bring anything and do not help. I want to understand and the thirst for knowledge is always young and strong.

CAMMI'S CONCLUSION (full translation)

I thank those who chose to go hunting/shooting with an English Setter. They preserve the pointing breeds's authenticity. Congratulation and please always remember avidity, intelligence and conformation, this will preserve the English Setter!

Angelo Cammi, Piacenza (Italy), April 2016

Save room for dessert

I like not-so-sweet desserts, and I always save room for them but, in this case, Briony, who came last, was the dessert.

This shooting season, for me, this year is quite quiet... With the exception of today, I had only one proper shooting day, the opening of the shooting season. Then nothing but for two micro-walks in the countryside carrying a shotgun, alone, no boar hunting yet. I really enjoy shooting, but this year it seems to be impossible to keep up with everything. I continue training Briony, attend some trials, work and prepare demanding university exams, sadly is really hard to find any free time to go shooting. Furthermore, nobody wants to come shooting with me, I must be an awful person! No, let's put

jokes aside, the problem is that Briony is steady to flush and fairly obedient, while the average Italian pointing dog is not steady and is usually... well... WILD! It would not be fair to pretend her to be obedient and steady when other dogs are encouraged to misbehave .

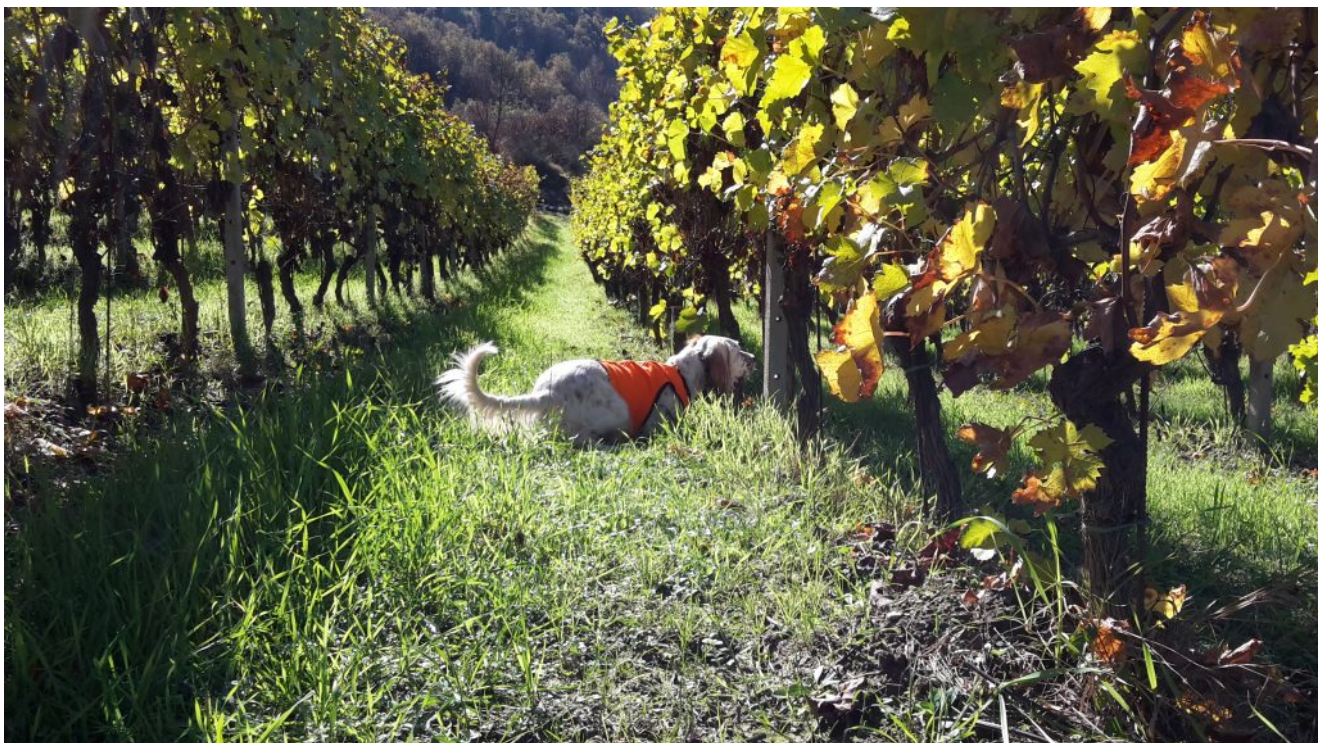


Biting the dessert!

Yesterday night I was commenting a Facebook post by my friend Andrea Vaccari (he has a [nice blog](#) on the Bracco Italiano, if you are interested in the breed). Andrea is a good hunter and a reasonably good trainer: he was complaining because almost all of the Italian hunters, who shoot over pointing dogs, feel the need to have a GPS tracking collar and/or a beeper to locate their furry friend. I agree with Andrea, this is nonsense and often equals to a lack of sportsmanship. People throw dogs out cars, let them run like wild horses and then go looking for them using some high tech device. Some people are really proud of having dogs who hunt (obviously for themselves) one mile ahead of their handler. I found this rather stupid and sometimes even annoying as beepers are extremely loud and can be heard from afar. Also, how can you test important qualities such as trainability, cooperation and connection to the handler? I am not attacking GPS and beepers because I do not like them: technology can be useful but it should not be used as an excuse to avoid training a dog.

When you say something against beepers and GPS collars, people get quite defensive and claim that they have purchased these devices for "safety". Yes, it is true, a GPS collar can be useful if a dog gets lost or something happens, but we are talking about pointing dogs, not about hounds. A pointing dog should hunt close and visible enough to be useful to the gun, which means you have to train the dog to hunt at a reasonable distance from you. If you keep the dog at the proper distance, you can see him and see what happens around him, you do not need a GPS tracking collar. Furthermore, a GPS tracking collar cannot save the dog if the dog is too far: last spring a young setter drowned in a river. He was wearing a GPS collar and the owner witnessed the whole tragedy through the device, he was one mile away from the dog. I think GPS collars give you a false illusion of safety: people think that knowing the dog's location they can save him in case of need, what they do not

consider is that they can be too far. This false illusion, in my opinion, indirectly encourages owners to give more and more freedom to dogs, in the false hope to bag one more bird, and yes birds are scarce here. I was also told that a GPS tracking collar is almost compulsory if you have a German pointing dog because they like chasing deer, people cannot not believe that you can drop a properly trained Deutsch Drahthaar when a deer is present. If you hunt woodcock, however, the beeper is even better – they claim- as you can locate the dog without checking the GPS screen constantly and... Brown dogs cannot be seen in the wood! What about a high visibility orange vest? It is cheaper and it does not make noise.



When I first got involved with pointing dogs, I used to train with Deutsch Drahthaars (German Wirehaired Pointers), these dogs were trained for German Hunting Tests and obedience was incredibly important. I used to admire these dogs (I have a soft spot for these rugged hunters) and their people, I never thought any English Setters could learn the same things. In 2015, instead, I went to England and I saw some English Setters behaving like the Germans I knew, what an awakening! I can candidly admit that for me there is a BE (Before England)

and a AE (After England) era, as my views on dog handling and training radically changed. I eventually came to the conclusion that there are two pointing dog training methods:

- ***The Italian Method: aka let the dog run and do whatever he likes and... chase him;***
- ***The German (but also British, Scandinavian...) Method: aka the dog has to do what you ask him to do, no matter what.***



As a consequence, I now feel a “**little**” out of place and none of my friends has a dog who can go shooting with Briony. The last time she went shooting with other dogs was last year, I was invited to a nice estate and I brought her: huge mistake. Dogs were running all over the place, no obedience, no steadiness nothing AND... guess what, a group of incredibly disappointed dog owners. They could not get close to the birds in time to shoot, birds were flying out of the estate and taking the dogs away with them. It was terrible, Briony was doing well but, being the only dog still around she became an easy target, all that was happening was our fault! Exhausted, I took her back the car and began picking blackthorns, shooters then calmed down, came to me and sincerely apologized. I went back to the grounds, but left Briony in the car, it was the wisest thing to do. This year... I got invited

to the same place again, by some of the same people. They are good friends, I like them and I did not want to disappoint them in any way: we have been shooting together for years and, when Briony was younger, it was thanks to the birds they paid for that she gained experience. I really owe them much, but I did not want to find myself in unpleasant situation again. I kindly accepted the invitation, but I told them I was not going to run Briony. They offered to give me ground for myself, but I refused, I told them I was happy to be their guest and I would have enjoyed their dogs. Briony was going have a run at the end of the shooting day, alone.



When I reached the lunch hut at 9 AM, they had already left so the gamekeeper told me where to go. A pack of SIX English Setters was running all over the hill: I could quickly locate everybody. Two men were on this side of the hill, and two more on the other side. Two shooters were following two (randomly chosen) dogs and the other two were following the remaining three. The sixth dog had disappeared. I joined the first two shooters that passed by me, their setters were wearing a GPS collar because, I was told, they tended to roam. The men disappeared as soon as they came, the two white dogs told them

it was time to move to a different place. The gamekeeper gave up and remained with me for a while: the missing white dog was running wild in a different part of the estate. An "important" client was shooting there, and other keepers were busy trying to catch the white wild dog, I bet he was having a lot of fun. The other friends eventually passed by with their three setters, I followed them for about three hours. The dogs were nice but they worked like a pack. Vento is the leader and the other ones, humans included, follow. These dogs could find birds, point them, honour each other's points and retrieve killed birds, but this game had no rules. Dogs were not steady and did not make a good use of the ground, I could see no logic behind their running but, most of all, they did not mind the owner. Yes, they waited for him as they wanted to retrieve the birds and they knew the birds had to be shot first but, after the bird had fallen and being grabbed in their mouths, they would quickly forget any humans.



Keeping an eye...

By the end of the morning, 18 birds (pheasants and grey partridges) were bagged but, we had gone up and down the hill and in and out of woods and briars walking at least twice on the same ground. Some grey partridge mini-coveys were also flying back and forth, teasing us. When my friends announced they were going back to the car, I went to mine and let Briony have a well deserved run, this is what happened. As soon as we left the car she pointed, she waited for me and then roaded towards the bird, a grey flew from afar, she did not see her but I stopped her. I then told her to go ahead with the action and she did it again, another grey which flew into the bushes. Briony was steady and we could perform the same action again, on a third bird. I then let her "play" again with the greys (now more hidden by briars) until bushes began to thicken to let me keep an eye on her. In less than 20 minutes, I could have bagged about three or four birds, without running back and forth like a comet, without a GPS and without a beeper. I then moved to a more open ground and let her run left and right, practicing some obedience. More greys, undisturbed by my non-chasing dog – were in a wood below us but she had already done what she was supposed to do, and confirmed me that my sacrifices had been definitely worth! I was very happy!!!



When, over lunch, I told people what happened and why I handled the dog in the way I did, they were happy for me and impressed at the same time. Some asked how I trained her, I simply told everybody that it was just hard work and that everybody could do the same. They vaguely agreed, but underlined they had no time to undertake such an intensive training program, Fishing ad hare then became the main topic until...they saw Briony again in the parking lot. She was on lead and she did not do anything special but for behaving nicely and remaining seated if told to do so. There were other unknown shooters around and many of them came to see the "trained" dog: according to some I am very "lucky" to own such a dog. Of course I have been lucky to find her when she was a plumpy puppy but, what came later was not just luck. Luck played an important role because I had a chance to have my British eye opening experience; had a chance to ask questions and get answers; had a chance to have wonderful mentors, but I was also open enough to discard an old system of beliefs and start working hard following a new scheme.

Ps. If I could make it, you can do it! Peace, love and happy training! I am in a happy/hippie mood tonight!



The Missing Link: the Moor

Warning, this is a hamster article. What???

A hamster article is one of those articles that starts running into the writers's mind, exactly as a hamster would do on its wheel. Hamster articles want to be told and can get impatient. My hamster has been running for more than a month, it is time to make it happy. The little critter wants me to write about the Missing Link, or rather, about the Moor. Those who know me personally, or have been in touch with me for a while, have probably already realized that I am a little weird, and that I am completely at ease with this trait. But, sometimes, I do feel out of place or as if something was missing.

Speaking of English Setters, which I am deeply devoted to, a puzzle piece was missing, it took me 16 years since my first setter to find it. Most weird adults had been weird children,

I am not exception: as toddler, I absolutely refused milk and my feeding bottle used to contain tea, no wonder I could not sleep. When I was four, the kindergarten teachers called my parents, they were alarmed because I used too much purple and violet in my drawings. My parents could not give any rational explanations, nor I can't being still known by the paint shop as the lady who orders custom made mauve/heather for her walls. At five, I used to have tea and potato pancakes for breakfast, normal Italian children were fed coffee-latte with biscuits. I think it was also the time I was given a booklet on Queen Elizabeth 25th Silver Jubilee, I kept it like a treasure and it is still on my bookshelf. One year later, I joined an extra-curricular English language class, and discovered through my textbook, that British houses for sale have bathtubs full of giant spiders. And, finally, at ten, I was absolutely convinced that I "needed" a working English Setter, my parents not so.



Walls...and more!

Years later, I eventually got one and I began shooting over pointing dogs and attending field trials. Something, however,

was missing. I enjoyed my time in the countryside, I kept reading, asking and following judges and more experienced hunters to learn more, but something I could not define was still missing. All that I knew was that I loved some shooting grounds more than others. I could mention Villa Alta in Ruino; Costa del Vento and Costa Pelata in Montalto – all of them in the Apennines and all of them, ironically – I would have discovered later – pretty moor-like. Other places were simply dull. Italians believe British pointing dogs need space, and justify “grand quete” and its extremes, on the premise that these dogs were born for the moors. My fellow countrymen think that is perfectly fine for an English Setter to run from a valley to another (while being tracked with a GPS collar) because it was created to run on moors. Pointers are allowed to run even wider, two or three valleys might be fine. I did not buy into this theory entirely, but I managed to keep my thoughts for myself. Maybe they were right but, to me, it was like they were trying to fit a foot in the wrong shoe.



Costa del Vento in February

Setters running in wide open plains, setters used in woods, or among briars and bushes, were doing well, proving to be a quite versatile and adaptable breed but, my gut feelings kept telling me something was still out of place. I had old pictures of setters on the moor in my books and on my walls, they were black and white pictures and I could not figure out the colours. In 2008, at the CLA Gamefair, I purchased the GWT (Gamekeepers Welfare Trust) Ladies & Gamekeepers Calendar: the moor was shining in purple! It was not just the heather: the sky and the light were coming in different shades of violet, the whole atmosphere was purple! It was so surreal, so magic! I thought the colours had been recreated using Photoshop. I can be pretty naïve sometimes!

In 2015 went on a moor for the first time and everything felt incredibly familiar and normal. The dogs running on the moor were fitting perfectly in the picture: grouse, heather and lavender skies seemed to have been tailored for them. As soon as I left the moor, I missed it: I felt I had to go back, live it, understand it. One year later, those purple skies were watching me from above, I was smiling back at them. I spent a month among heather, among grouse, among British pointing dogs: everything fell into place, my English Setter, who was there, can confirm. Setters belonged to the moor, or viceversa; grouse suited the dogs perfectly; heather supported their job and weather was great! Well, weather on the moor is hardly great, if we evaluate it according to human standards, but if you are a dog that is a great weather! It is cold enough, windy enough, wet enough. I got so used to being blown away by the wind that I seriously miss it!

I was (and I am) so in love with the moor that I enthusiastically shared pictures with my Italian friends whose mixed reactions surprised me. One, in particular, noticed that the moors are lacking of trees, they are barren he stated. I never noticed there are no trees, this probably happened because I do not consider moors to be barren. On the contrary,

they are full of wonderful gifts, you just have to be sensitive enough to recognize them. I do not need woods, woodcock do not bewitch me: Italians love shooting woodcock over English Setters, they are fascinating birds, but I cannot honestly claim I love them. Grouse are different and they are great teachers, both challenging and patient, I think they are probably one of the best birds for training pointing dogs. Also, I do not consider woods to be the ideal ground for an ES: trees and leaves prevent you from seeing the dog work, heather instead, while hiding grouse, leaves the dog under the spotlights.



Dogs, purple heather, lavender skies

The moor is a sacred space and only well behaved dogs are welcome: moors are for training, trialling and shooting. Up to now I have experienced only the first [two activities](#) and I will keep writing on them, what I can say, briefly, is that trialling in the UK is different. I am not here to claim it is better (or worse) and I cannot find a proper word to define my feelings towards it, but, in its being different it seems

incredibly normal to me and... it proved me right! Moor, grouse & trials teach the dogs to range wide but “properly wide” which differs from “nonsense wide”. The ground openness might be tempting, but a smart pointing dog, trained the British way, will run as wide as it would be allowed to do during a traditional – GPS free -shooting day. Being shooting the first gundog related activity I got involved in, I cannot but agree. Maybe one day I will witness grouse shooting, this will put the finishing touches to the painting: English Setter, purple heather, gunpowder smell and lavender skies.

Still curious about British trials? Check the section A Month on the Moor or [click here](#).

English Setters European Championship 2016 (Gibier Tiré)

This year the Pointer & Setter Club Schweiz was in charge to organize this important event. Due to the complex Swiss shooting (and dog training) laws, the trial was set up in Northern Italy, only two hours away from the Swiss borders. More specifically, we were hosted by Dr. Machiavelli private shooting estate in Cantalupo Ligure (AL), a place which is both easy to reach and suitable for this kind of trial. Simone Meili, of the Setter & Pointer Club Schweiz, proved to be the human incarnation of the famous Swiss efficiency and precision. The trial brochure was very accurate and she set up a very convenient meeting place: it was extremely easy to find the venue, it had an ample parking lot, a small bar and a toilet, wi-fi connection and light sockets for computers! As

you can imagine, everything else during the trial ran smoothly.



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onship on the 2nd day (Oct 10), as the previous part of the event had been covered by my colleague Erica Recchia. The atmosphere was very international: there were several teams coming from different parts of Europe. Judges as well had different nationalities and backgrounds. I was told to follow Stake 2, judged by D.Sormaz (Serbia – President), F. Gerzinic (Croatia – right side) and D.Gouzounas (Greece- left side), there were 12 braces in this stake. The stake was going to be run on Chiminiera and we had Roberto Locatelli as beat steward (and gun!) and Dejan Gavrilovic as a second gun. We had rain almost until the first brace was to be casted off, it was an unusually chilly morning for October, with a moderate/fresh breeze which kept changing its direction, making partridges swift to fly and scents tricky to be grasped by the dogs. The grounds were really nice and heterogeneous: dogs could run wide but had to make an intelligent use of the ground. Cantalupo estate is scattered on the hills and its crops and

vegetation can dramatically change from place to place. During a run, a dog might face grass, briars, small woods, bushes, tall and wiry grass, rocks: dogs had to be smart and adapt themselves, exactly as it would happen during a real rough shooting day. Almost all the dogs had a chance to meet or scent game: there were pheasants and grey partridges, coveys. We also bumped into a hare and in a couple of roe deers followed by the respective English Setters. I spotted six wild boars in a distance, while judge Gerzinic said he saw some wolves the night before: I was not surprised as Cantalupo means "singing wolf".

Slideshow below

The first brace was composed by Ciak del Zagnis handled by Nicolic (Serbia) and by Pianigiani's Ford handled by Stefano Pianigiani (Italy). During his run Ciak pointed, produced and retrieved a pheasant, his action lead him to obtain a 1st Exc CAC/CACIT and to become Vice European Champion 2016. In the second brace, with Ami Cicco du Turbillon Blanc handled by Simone Meilli (Switzerland) and Dac de Playabarry handled by J.L.Diaz we witnessed Dac earning an Exc. To see another action worth grading, we had to wait until brace 5 when Bruss, handled by Patrizzi (Italy), had a nice point and obtained a 2nd Exc. Other dogs graded were Pirlo od Gastona, handled by Zekanovic (Croatia), and Marzale's Hogan, handled by Elvis Trajkov (Macedonia). During the 12th and last brace, Rex del Faenor handled by Sanz (Spain) had a good run and performed two excellent actions, one of which included a very long roading to produce the pheasant, he was graded 3rd Exc.

At the end of this run, we were joined by the competitors and the judges of Stake 1: Sergio Bianconi (Italy – President), W.Jost (Austria) and N.Kassianidis (Cipro) to decide through a "barrage" which dog, after two trials in two days, was going to obtain the title of European Champion 2016. The judges selected for this task were D.Gouzounas (Greece – President), F. Gerzinic (Croatia) and N.Kassianidis (Cipro) who, after a

quick run, announced Atos, handled by Mirko Caramanti (Italy), to be the winner.

[Click here to see the event photogallery as a slideshow](#)

[Click here to see the event photogallery as an album](#)

Results are as follows:

European Champion 2016 GT – Athos handled by Mirko Caramanti (Italy)

Vice European Champion 2016 GT – Ciak del Zagnis owned and handled by Nikolic (Serbia)

European Champion 2016 GT Females – Lavezzi del Zagnis owned by Scandella and handled by Giuseppe Pezzotta (Switzerland)

Setter und Pointer Club Schweiz Championnat d Europe GT Cantalupo 2016			
10. octobre 2016	Batterie: 1		
Terrain: Vigo Ponso	Guide: Fabio		
Juges: S. Bianconi (P) W. Jost N. Kassianidis			
Couple	Nom du chien	Sex Conducteur	Resultat
1	Erode della Bassa Reggina	m V. Antimo	2. MB
	Daar del Zagnis	m F. Rosselli	
2	Balboa Zagni del Duda	m G. Pezzotta	
	Morinensis Casper	m M. Mori	
3	Cheyenne	m G. Ferrari	1. MB
	Dendaberri Neron	m F. Gomez	
4	Amor od Pastorcic	m L. Pastorcic	
	Dalerik Aramis	m D. Cominotti	
5	Max del Zagnis	m F. Rosselli	
	Casper de Ademar	m F. Gomez	
6	Lavezzi del Zagnis	f G. Pezzotta	
	Hard Ambrofellis	m M. Iazzetta	
7	One Dream Kosmas Casper	m K. Panagiottis	
	Malcottinensis Rock	m D. Cominotti	
8	Percha de Bosende	f F. Gomez	
	Bajron moreno del Zagnis	m G. Pezzotta	
9	Ciro Sirtouf	m K. Panagiottis	
	Atos	m M. Caramanti	
10	Lem (detto Rochy)	m A. Mariani	
	Adrenalina del Zagnis	f G. Pezzotta	
11	Atom del Sassovivo	m L. Pastorcic	
	Carpin de Ademar	m F. Gomez	
12	Alex	m K. Panagiottis	
	Dalerik Big	m D. Cominotti	

Setter und Pointer Club Schweiz Championnat d Europe GT Cantalupo 2016			
10. octobre 2016	Batterie: 2		
Terrain: Chiminiera	Guide: Locatelli		
Juges: D. Sormaz (P) F. Gerzanic D. Gouzounas			
Couple	Nom du chien	Sex Conducteur	Resultat
1	Ciak del Zagnis	m Z. Nikolic	1. Ecc CAC/CACIT
	Pianigiani's Ford	m St. Pianigiani	
2	Ami Cicco du Tourbillon blanc	m S. Meili	Ecc
	Dac de Playbarri	m J.L. Diaz	
3	Marzale's History D'O	m E. Trajkov	
	Akron del Tremelano	m Z. Nikolic	
4	Cyrano du Tourbillon blanc	m S. Meili	
	Rajna od Karaotoka	f J. Zekanovic	
5	Ali del Tamerlano	m Z. Nikolic	
	Bruss	m P. Patrizzi	2. Ecc
6	Diazarranza Hugo	m J.L. Diaz	
	Diana	f E. Trajkov	
7	Brandan del Zagnis	m Z. Nikolic	
	Pianigiani's Lori	f St. Pianigiani	
8	Pirio od Gastona	m J. Zekanovic	MB
	Marzale's Hogan	m E. Trajkov	MB
9	Braco du Tourbillon blanc	m F. Feurté	
	Apasch del Zagnis	f Z. Nikolic	
10	Fren	m E. Trajkov	
	Piqe od Gastona	m J. Zekanovic	
11	Torres del Zagnis	m Z. Nikolic	
	Pianigiani's Jilgen	m St. Pianigiani	
12	Arno	m J. Zekanovic	
	Rex del Faenor	m J. L. Sanz	3. Ecc

Results Day 2

Setter und Pointer Club Schweiz
Championnat d Europe GT Cantalupo 2016

9, octobre 2016

Batterie: 1

Terrain Chiminiera

Guide: Locatelli

Juges: D. Sormaz (P)
F. Gerzic
D. Gouzounas

Handwritten signatures: D. Sormaz, F. Gerzic, D. Gouzounas

Couple No	Nom du chien	Sex	Conducteur	Resultat
1	Atom del Sassovivo	m	L. Pastorcic	
	Ciro Sirtouf	m	K. Panagiottis	
2	Carpin de Ademar	m	F. Gomez	
	Lem (detto Rochy)	m	A. Mariani	Ecc
3	Alex	m	K. Panagiottis	
	Adrenalina del Zagnis	f	G. Pezzotta	
4	Hard Ambrofellis	m	M. Iazetta	Ecc
	Dalerik Big	m	D. Cominotti	
5	Atos	m	M. Caramanti	1. Ecc CAC/CACIT
	Bajron moreno del Zagnis	m	G. Pezzotta	Ecc
6	One Dream Kosmas Casper	m	K. Panagiottis	
	Morinensis Casper	m	M. Mori	
7	Max del Zagnis	m	F. Rosselli	
	Percha de Bosende	f	F. Gomez	
8	Malcottinensis Rock	m	D. Cominotti	
	Lavezzi del Zagnis	f	G. Pezzotta	2. Ecc RCAC/RCACIT
9	Amor od Pastorcic	m	L. Pastorcic	
	Casper de Ademar	m	F. Gomez	Ecc
10	Dalerik Aramis	m	D. Cominotti	
	Balboa Zagni del Duda	m	G. Pezzotta	3.Ecc
11	Erode della Bassa Reggina	m	V. Antimo	
	Cheyenne	f	G. Ferrari	
12	Dendaberri Neron	m	F. Gomez	
	Daar del Zagnis	m	F. Rosselli	

Setter und Pointer Club Schweiz
Championnat d Europe GT Cantalupo 2016

9, octobre 2016

Batterie: 2

Terrain Vigo Ponzo

Guide: Fabio

Juges: S. Bianconi (P)
W. Jost
N. Kassianidis

Handwritten signature: S. Bianconi

Couple	No Chien	Nom du chien	Sex	Conducteur
1	Arno		m	J. Zekanovic
	Masche del Zagnis		m	Z. Nikolic
2	Rex del Faenor		m	J. L. Sanz
	Fren		m	E. Trajkov
3	Pianigiani's Jilgen		m	St. Pianigiani
	Apasch del Zagnis		f	Z. Nikolic
4	Pique od Gastona		m	J. Zekanovic
	Braco du Tourbillon blanc		m	F. Feurté
5	Marzale's Hogan		m	E. Trajkov
	Brandan del Zagnis		m	Z. Nikolic
6	Pirlo od Gastona		m	J. Zekanovic
	Pianigiani's Lori		f	St. Pianigiani
7	Diazarranza Hugo		m	J.L.Diaz
	Ali del Tamerlano		m	Z. Nikolic
8	Diana		f	E. Trajkov
	Cyrano du Tourbillon blanc		m	S. Meili
9	Rajna od Karaotoka		f	J. Zekanovic
	Ciak del Zagnis		m	Z. Nikolic
10	Marzale's History D'O		m	E. Trajkov
	Ami Cicco du Tourbillon blanc		m	S. Meili
11	Bruss		m	P. Patrizzi
	Akron del Tremelano		m	Z. Nikolic
12	Pianigiani's Ford		m	St. Pianigiani
	Dac de Playabarri		m	J.L.Diaz

Results Day 1

Results Day 1

When dog training meets pragmatism

There are instances in which you need someone reliable and pragmatic by your side. It is not only soldiers on battlefields who need mates full of practical sense and decisiveness, dog people need them as well. Some dog people, especially those with red hair who get lost in training philosophies and follow shamans, need these people more than others.

After religiously following [White Feather](#) for more than six months, Briony decided that it was time for a change, she wanted less discipline and more freedom, I could hardly find

the balance. WF training grounds, furthermore, were no longer available as the alfalfa and other crops were growing quickly. No other suitable training ground was available: spring was coming with its crops which were going to make impossible to run a dog anywhere. My only option was to go to some private areas, called Zone B or Zone C, in which dogs are allowed to run all year round, there I went. My first training sessions were short, I wanted to play on the safe side, until one morning, C. showed up accusing me to train at a "snail speed".

I first met C. in **1999**, I just had to say goodbye to Massachusetts for good, my former dog had died and I decided it was time to treat myself with an English Setter. After all I had wanted one since I was a 10 years old child. Given my unhealthy tendency to save the world and rescue those in need, I had absolutely no interest in a puppy: I wanted a rescue and I got one. I fell for a sweet and gentle orange belton male who reciprocated my feelings immediately and with too much enthusiasm: after eight hours in my house he had already developed a severe form of separation anxiety. I knew he had been poorly socialized, kept kenneled for three years and then trained (aka abused) by a professional trainer. I knew he had all the reasons to behave like he did but...living with him was hell! I follow the manual: undertook a behavioral therapy; enrolled him in an obedience class; started him as a search & rescue dog and even gave him antidepressants, improvements, however, were small and slow. His breeder, happy to know the dog had been safely re-homed, gave me his pedigree and I realized Socks was meant to be a working dog, he even had a great ancestry. He was my first "gundog" but, my previous experience with other breeds told me that, MAYBE, letting him do the job he was born for, could have helped him to overcome all his fears.



Socks at 13 years old retrieving a pheasant

At the time, however, I had no idea of how an English Setter was supposed to work; of how I should have handled him and of what I needed to teach him. I read books, which is what I do when I need to learn something, but I wanted to meet someone who could provide a face-to-face support. Given Socks' behavioural problems, I could not board him at a professional trainer's kennel and... professional trainers boarding their pupils seemed to be the only people training English Setters. I tried to ask some shooters for advice, but none seemed to take seriously a young and inexperienced woman with a rescued ES. Women with English Setters in Italy are still very rare in 2016, imagine how the situation could have been in 1999: it was, and still is, a male dominated and male oriented world! Opportunities, however, often show up when you least expect them and, Monica, a woman training GWPs in sunny Tuscany, phoned to tell me she had the "men" for me, and that they were located just a few miles away from my house. To make the long story short, Monica contacted [two famous drahthaar](#) (GWPs)

handlers and trainers and convinced them to help me. One of them could not offer any support at the time (he did later), while the other one was brave enough to accept to work with us.



For about two months, I trained at least twice a week with C., who was already a quite successful trainer and handler in Italy and in Germany. We worked mainly on recall, but he taught me some very basic things I would have never imagined at the time, such as how to use the whistle and how to keep the dog focused on me by changing directions. Socks improved, and I later continued to work him by myself and for himself: I knew he was not going to become a great shooting dog, I simply wanted him to enjoy life and become more sure of himself. I think I last trained him with C. on quails in 2004, I then moved to work with other setters on the hills and we never had other chances to train together, We always kept in touch though and in the years, I sent him some “clients” who, together with other dogs he worked with, gave him the opportunity to become one of the most successful HPRs trainers

I know.

C. is now a well known “pro”, specialized in training GWP's for German Hunting Tests (VJP/HZP/VGP) and personal rough shooting dogs, I was not surprised to meet him on the training ground dealing with a GSP who used to eat and swallow quails. I watched his pupil running, and saw she retrieving the quail correctly after the shoot, so I asked the gamekeeper if C. had already solved the problem. “

“No... The dog never eats the quail in his presence, just with the owner. It should be a matter of body language and stance, look at him.... But he needs the dog to make the mistake to correct her... He is the best trainer working on my ground”.

I kept watching and nothing happened on that day, until it came my turn to run the dog. “Let her go” – yelled someone behind my back “- but when you whistle be firm, and yell at her if needed. The key to freedom is control”, easier said than done! That was just the preface.



Let her go...

When C. Found out I was training Briony for grouse trials, he started to behave as if he wanted to be part of the project. We kept meeting on the training ground by chance but, each time we met, he had some good advice for me. He never tried to train Briony in my place, nor to ditch the [Shaman](#) methods, he simply intervened, firmly and pragmatically, to speed up my training and to teach me to be more sure of myself and of my training. I think he somehow trained me: he was the person who forced me to remove the check cord and the same one who encouraged me to forget quails and start testing steadiness using partridges and pheasants. He also encouraged me to trust the dog more and to run her on other grounds to see how she would react to different birds in different places. He watched all my moves and all my handling, corrected my mistakes and created new, more advanced (that was smart!), settings in which to test Briony. He minimized my concerns on rabbits and even lent me an expensive bird launcher. Well to be honest he lent that but... recommended me several times to switch it off after each use and... not to loose it (as if it were small!). So, well, thank you C. for being one of those experienced and helpful people who made grouse trials possible for me and Briony.