

Lady Jean Fforde of Isle of Arran Kennels – An Appreciation by Jon Kean

Herewith a tribute to Lady Jean Fforde who has passed away on 13th October 2017, 3 weeks before her 97th birthday by Jon Kean

I first met Lady Jean in the 1970s – appropriately enough it was on the grouse moors in Perthshire. Janette and I were there just to spectate at the field trial and find out more about working Pointers and Setters. Lady Jean immediately put us at ease and explained what was happening at the trial. My one abiding memory from that day was the unusual footwear Lady Jean sported. It was a pair of sandshoes (baseball type) with the words “Skateboard City” emblazoned on the side. Her great friend Mrs Patience Badenoch Nicolson was there too. Their guidance inspired me to find out more about working Pointers.

From that day, friendship developed and I learned so much from Lady Jean and Patience about working Pointers. After a while, I asked Lady Jean if it would be possible to purchase an Isle of Arran Pointer. My wish was granted! In historical terms, the Pointer kennels were among the first, if not the first, to be registered by her grandfather at the Kennel Club when it was formed. In 1983, I brought back from Arran two male puppies from Lady Jean’s litter, sired by Moanruad Aron (the late John Nash’s Pointer) and Isle of Arran Neillia (litter sister of the 1981 Champion Stake winner FT CH Isle of Arran Larch, handled by Mrs Marcia Clark). I reared Isle of Arran Micha and the brother Isle of Arran Gideon was bought by Duncan Davis from the North of England. The rest, as they say, is history. Gideon duly became a field trial Champion and Micha (pet name Duke) won the Champion Stake at Bollihope Moor in County Durham in 1989. Duke was a fantastic Pointer for our

shooting trips to Garrogie Estate, owned by Charles Connell in Invernesshire. Apart from his game finding ability, Duke's great attribute was his stamina and endurance. He had the strength of 3 dogs.



Lady Jean Fforde and Jon Kean – Champion Stake 1989

Lady Jean and Patience were hugely influential people in the Pointer world. They were always willing to help and offer advice to anyone interested in working gundogs. One day, I was called aside for an informal chat. Lady Jean told me: "Patience and I both agree that you need to put something back into the sport. We think you should take on the role of Honorary Secretary of the Scottish Field Trials Association." I was duly appointed in 1986 and have done the job of Secretary for the Pointers and Setters ever since.

Looking back, there were many famous Pointers with the Isle of Arran prefix. The list is endless – Isle of Arran African Queen, Scotney Isle of Arran Regent, Isle of Arran Juno, FT CH Scotney Isle of Arran Jack, Isle of Arran Minoru, FT CH Isle of Arran Dice, Isle of Arran Lilly. Lady Jean's favourite was FT CH Isle of Arran June, a beautiful orange and white bitch. In Lady Jean's memoir, she wrote: *"June became the dog of my life – I adored her! Considering she was the first dog of any kind I had trained myself, she was a miracle. I trained her by phoning Patience Nicolson week by week, and asking for instructions."*

Lady Jean was President of the Pointer Club of Scotland since it was founded many years ago. She had many, many interests outwith the world of field trials. She was a keen gardener, for example. Her parents brought back many rare plants from their trips throughout the world. On our visits to Strabane, her home at Brodick, Lady Jean gave us a guided tour of the gardens. On one visit, Lady Jean told us she would be sending her friend to collect us from the ferry at Brodick. The friend just happened to be Richard Todd, the Oscar-nominated actor best known for war dramas like *The Hasty Heart*, *The Dam Busters* and *The Longest Day*.

She was also involved with the RNLI and the Red Cross. She was an artist. Lady Jean wrote fascinating memoirs – *Castles in the Air* and *Feet On the Ground – From Castles to Catastrophe*. In those books, we discover she spent part of her life in India, Palestine, Sierra Leone, Northern Rhodesia and of course her beloved Isle of Arran. It was at the Government Code and Cypher School at Bletchley Park that Lady Jean joined the army of women who cracked the German code to save countless lives and shorten the war by at least two years.

Lady Jean's mother was very keen on taking cine films of life on Arran, which included stalking and shooting over Pointers on the island from the 1930s onwards. A couple of years ago we spent a lovely afternoon in Strabane viewing some of the reels of film, and they are fascinating to watch.

Lady Jean sent me a gift of the book called *Training Setters and Pointers for Field Trials*, by Professor John Beazley, Alf Manners and Arnold White-Robinson. It is signed : *"To Jon. Wishing You every luck in field trials with your puppy. Jean Fforde 1981."* I have used this book as a guide for seminars ever since.

In 1982, Lady Jean asked me to show her Champion Stake winner, Larch, at Crufts in London. This I duly did and was thrilled when the Judge Mrs Kitty Edmondson awarded a prize to Larch.

Unbeknown to me, Lady Jean's best friend , Princess Antoinette of Monaco, was a surprise visitor at the ringside at Crufts.

I will always have great memories of Lady Jean. Our last visit to Lady Jean was in July this year. She was in good spirits and very keen to hear news from the world of Pointers. RIP Lady Jean.

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

The English Springer by Arthur Croxton-Smith

From the book The Power of the Dog (1910)

THE ENGLISH SPRINGER

"O, how full of briers is this working-day world!"

Shakespeare—*As You Like It*.

"The chief requisite in all kinds of spaniels is, that they be good finders, and have noses so true that they will never overrun a scent. . . . They should be high-mettled, as regardless of the severest weather as of the most punishing cover, and ever ready to spring into the closest thicket the moment a pointed finger gives the command."

General Hutchinson

The transition from the toy varieties to a spaniel is somewhat violent. The one is intended to please the eye, to gratify the

æsthetic sense, and charm by his manners in the house; the other is designed primarily, by serving the sportsman in the held, to accomplish useful duties, **but at the same time his docility of disposition, sagacity of expression and beauty of coat make him also a welcome companion when the day's labours are ended.** In estimating the worth of a gundog I should lay much stress upon his fitness for associating with mankind, for there is no doubt that if we win the confidence and friendship of our four-footed servitors the pleasure in their possession is much increased, and we have them under far better command when at work. Of all the foolish things written the hackneyed couplet so much quoted has precedence:

"A woman, a spaniel, and a walnut tree,
The more you beat them, the better they be."

The ladies are quite capable of looking after themselves, and need no champion. I daresay a walnut tree may be all the better for a good "splashing," as we used to say in the Midlands, **but I am certain the less a whip is used on a dog of any sort the more likely are we to be successful in our efforts to exact prompt and ready obedience to our commands.** The man who uses physical correction too freely is in want of a practical application of the monition contained in the Book of Proverbs: "A rod for the back of fools."

Of the many handsome sub-varieties of spaniels with which we are familiar to-day the English Springer, perhaps, enjoys the least popularity, although his merits as a worker entitle him to a high place in our regard. As a show dog he has never assumed much prominence, but at held trials and on private shootings he is constantly demonstrating his utility. **No other spaniel has been bred less for "points" or more consistently for work.** Less excitable than the volatile Cocker, his longer legs and sturdier frame adapt him to purposes which the smaller is unable to perform. **On the other hand, unless well broken, he, by ranging too far afield, may put up the game out of gunshot.** It therefore follows that in his early days he

must be made absolutely steady. Whether he becomes so or not is not so much attributable to the inherent wickedness of the dog as to the lack of patience in his breaker. One is almost inclined to say that the good breaker is born not made. At any rate, supposing you have the leisure, this is a task better undertaken by yourself than entrusted to a gamekeeper, who may have neither the time nor disposition to act as a wise schoolmaster.

A Springer is large enough to retrieve both far and feather, but whether or no he should be encouraged to do this depends upon circumstances. General Hutchinson says: *"When a regular retriever can be constantly employed with spaniels, of course it will be unnecessary to make any of them fetch game (certainly never to lift anything which falls out of bounds), though all the team should be taught to 'seek dead.'* This is the plan pursued by the Duke of Newcastle's keepers, and obviously it is the soundest and easiest practice, for it must be always more or less difficult to make a spaniel keep within his usual hunting limits, who is occasionally encouraged to pursue wounded game, at his best pace, to a considerable distance."



"Tissington Flush"
Owned by Sir Hugo
Fitzherbert, Bart
and Painted by Maud

Earl

The word Springer is applied to all medium-legged spaniels, as apart from the short-legged ones, that are neither Clumbers nor Sussex. It is of good old English derivation, denoting the object for which the dog was employed--to spring birds to the net or gun. The form of the dog has not undergone any marked change since a Dictionary of Sport, published shortly before Queen Victoria came to the throne, spoke of him as differing but little from the Setter, except in size, being nearly two-fifths less in height and strength. He is of symmetrical formation, varying a good deal in size from thirty pounds to sixty pounds, with unbounded energy. He may be a self-coloured liver, black, or yellow, or pied or mottled with white, tan, or both. Miss Earl's picture brings out beautifully the correct shape of his body, and the handsome intelligent-looking head. Older pictures suggest that a hundred years ago or less the skull was broader between the ears, and the head shorter, but the refining process has not been carried far enough to jeopardise the brain power. In many breeds I have noticed that a broad skull indicates self-will and stubbornness, and therefore it seems to me that the slight change is all for the better.

The other variety of Springer indigenous to Wales is quite distinct from our own. He is smaller in size, and in colour he is red or orange and white, preference being given to the former.

From the same book: [click here to read about the English Pointer.](#)

PS. Don't forget to take a look at the [Gundog Research Project](#)!

A Gem from 1956: an Italian at British Trials

As some of you know, I inherited part of Dr. Ridella library and archive. Dr. Ridella was a veterinarian and an important English Setter breeder, his kennel name was Ticinensis. I feel really honoured to have been chosen as a custodian, but I hate to admit... I dusted and cleaned only half of the materials I have been given. Fifty years of canine magazines (1900-1950), however, are now readable and carefully stored. Knowing about this collection, a friend asked me to look for two peculiar articles written respectively in 1938 and in 1954. I could not find them but, while checking out nearby years, I found something absolutely unexpected, beautiful and fascinating. In the 1956 spring issue of the Rassegna Cinofila (the official name of the Italian Kennel Club Bulletin at the time), I found an article by judge Giulio Colombo (1886-1966). The man was a well known breeder (kennel della Baita) and judge for Setters and Pointers, he also imported some dogs from the UK and tried to keep the connection between Italy and Great Britain alive. Among his imports we shall remember **Lingfield Mystic** (who won the Derby); **Lingfield Ila**, **Lingfield Puma** and **Bratton Vanity**.



I discovered that, in 1956, he was asked to judge a partridge

trial in **Sutton Scotney** (Hampshire – UK) and wrote about his experience. I am not going to translate the full article, I am just summarizing the most important points. (Those interested can see large pictures of the article [here](#) and download the [.pdf file](#)– which can be translated with google translator).

He opens his piece mentioning Laverack, Llewellyn and Lady Auckland (with whom he was judging), and then explains how and why Setters and Pointers were created. He underlines that the game (grouse and grey partridges) and the waste, open and rough grounds forged these superlative breeds so that they could better suit the hunter. He tells us things I still see in the UK: Setters and Pointers are not expected to retrieve; Setters and Pointers must be very trainable and biddable, and that down and drop are fundamental teachings. Dogs must honour the brace and must quarter properly: Colombo explains the practical reasons behind all these expectations, this part occupies almost half of the article. His words make me miss what I saw, experienced and learnt during my time in the UK. As I often say, my dog would be very different if I had not seen their trials, and I would also be a much different trainer and handler. But I really like what I am now!!!

He then informs the reader about the differences (rules) between Italian and British trials: in Britain there is no “minute” (here all mistakes made during the first minute are forgiven); there is no established running time (here is 15 minutes) and good dogs are asked to run a second (and maybe a third round). He also lists the pros and cons of these choices. [You can read more about the differences between](#)



Italian and UK trials in my older articles.

It is interesting that he points out that judges, in the UK, do not comment on the dog's work (on the contrary, they are expected to so here) and that explaining what the dog did, in public... often leads the public to believe they know more than the judges. This proved to be true in my limited experience, watchers (Italian and foreign), despite being several hundred metres away from the dog, see – and

foresee- mistakes that handlers and judges, despite being right above the dog “miss”! I thought, that people in the fifties were more considerate, but, apparently, the art of attributing inexistent faults to other handlers' dogs has a long standing tradition.

Colombo then describes what he saw during the “Derby”. I do not know if that Derby is like the current Puppy Derby (for dogs under 2 years, running in a brace) as I cannot understand whether the dogs were running alone or in a brace. He says he saw some back castings, some dogs who needed more training and some dogs who sniffed on the ground/detailed around the quarry too much. Rabbits, hare and pheasant further complicated things. First prize went to **Lenwade Wizard**, Pointer dog owned by Mr. Arthur Rank, 15 months old described as stylish, good gallop, good at handling birds; second prize **Lenwade Whisper**, Pointer dog owned by Messrs P. P. Wayre's G. F. Jolly, aged 15 months. In the **Brace Stake** he noticed two Irish Setters **Sulhamstead Bey d'Or** and **F. T. Sulhamstead Basil d'Or** who eventually got second prize. As for the **All Aged stake** (which should be like the modern Open Stake), a Weimaraner was supposed to run with setters and pointers but was eventually withdrawn. Colombo was asked by Lady Hove to express his opinion: he seems to have had mixed feelings about what he saw. Let's not forget that he later writes that pointing dogs

are no longer common and popular in the UK, that people prefer spaniels and retrievers and Setters and Pointers are decaying. How are things now? Spaniels and retrievers still outnumber pointing dogs and this sounds a bit weird to Italians, being the average Italian hunter/shooter the owner of a pointing dog, most of often of an English Setter. [But... the two realities are very different.](#)

He writes that the “search” in the UK is no longer how it should be, and how it used to be. He states that, previously, the British wanted the dogs to run wider and faster. He says that that was the “ancient” way of interpreting the Grande Cerca. Whereas I read both Laverack and Arkwright, I do not recall anything like that and I am not familiar with other British authors advocating this working style. Also, I have not witnessed the Setter & Pointer early years, so I cannot say if what Colombo claims is true. I would

like to remember, however, that Giulio Colombo, besides breeding and judging, in 1950 published the book “**Trialer! An Essay on Gundogs**” on Setters and Pointers. The book became a bestseller, it is still a bestseller indeed, and deeply influenced Italian breeders, judges and fanciers. Giulio



Colombo ideal dog was a fast and furious super dog made of speed, deep castings and excellent nose. He called him “the pure”, “the fool”, then described him with these words: ***“The Trialer is the producer, the Masterpiece, the famous Artist’s painting, the fifty carats diamond, the pure gold”.*** He is New Year’s Day, not the remaining 364 days.”

So, I really wonder whether any British authors had ever outlined such a dog, or whether Colombo just believed an hypothetical British author did or, again, whether he

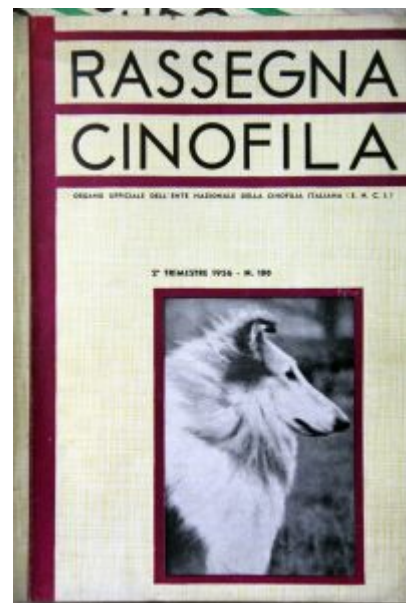
misunderstood some writings (he did not read English, as far as I know). So, basically, I think he was [expecting something different](#) and he did not entirely like what he saw. He complains about “interrupted” runs, short castings, slow runs, small parcels of ground to be explored, searches that gets “limited” by the judges and dogs forced to back on command. He writes that a British sportman defined some of the runs “*Springer Spaniel work*”. Some of these things still happens and might be even more noticeable if you come from Italy, where dogs are asked to run as much, as fast and as wide as they can (the pure, the fool...) and dogs usually back naturally but, our trials have other faults and he admits that, maybe, a British judge attending one of our trials, on a particular unlucky day, would not be impressed by what we show him. Giulio Colombo, however, was skilled enough to see recognize good things at British trials, he admits, for instance, having seen some dogs he really liked. Yes, he says some dogs were “low quality”, but equally admits others were outstanding. I share his opinion: some British dogs lack of class, style and pace to compete successfully here but others... are absolutely not inferior to some Made in Italy dogs. I really, really liked some dogs I saw in Britain, and I am sure they would make our judges smile. Colombo mentions **Seguntium Niblick**, Pointer owned Mr. J. Alun Roberts who got first prize in All Aged Stake; **Scotney Gary**, Pointer owned by Mr. Arthur Rank, second prize; **Scotney Solitaire**, Pointer owned by Mr. Arthur Rank, third prize; **Sulhamstead Basil d’Or** Irish Setter, fourth prize; **Ch. Downsmans Bracken**, English Setter, fifth prize; **Sulhamstead Nina d’Or**, Irish Setter owned by Mrs. Nagle e Miss M. Clarcks and **Flashaway Eve**, English Setter owned by Col. A. S. Dalding. I think he really liked the Flashaway Eve as he describes him as very avid, stylish and very a typical low set gallop, he thinks he has all the



features a dog needs to become a FT. Ch. He concludes with a note on **Dero 4° del Trasimeno** who was exported to the UK and is one of the ancestors of **Scotney Gary** (and of some American dogs) and **Blakfield Gide** stepsister of the Italian **Fast** and **Galf di S. Patrick**. Author thanks those who made his experience possible: **Mr. and Mrs Bank, Lady Auckland, Mr. Buckley, Mr. Binney, Mr. and Mrs. Mac Donald Daly, Mr. and Mrs. William Wiley, Mr. Lovel Clifford**

So which are the key points for contemporary readers? Giulio Colombo outlines the Setter and Pointer history and explains why these dogs should work in a given manner. It is a matter of grounds and of birds: before trials ever existed, these dogs were hunting dogs and had to work all day long for the hunter who wanted to go home with a bag filled with birds. Setters and Pointers were tested in difficult and real hunting situations and it soon became clear which behaviours and attitudes were useful and which were not. The most sought after traits and behaviours were later coded and field trials were born, not viceversa. Dogs used to be tested during real shooting days and then, the best of them, were trialed. Things were like this during the early Pointer and Setter days and, in my opinion, they should not have changed. Nowadays, there are, at least in Italy, FT.Ch. who have never been shot over and, most of all, are trained, handled or owned by people who had never hunted, and never hunted on grounds and birds suitable for these breeds. People therefore do not understand some of field trial rules, nor how the dogs should behave but they consider themselves "experts". Colombo mentions steadiness to flush and the commands **down** and **drop**, some of the most misunderstood things in my country. People think (and probably thought, already in 1956), that these commands are taught "just to show off". On the contrary they can make shooting safer (a steady dog is not likely to be shot) and the drop and the down are extremely useful on open grounds. I am not sure whether Colombo attended grouse trials and, if so, how abundant grouse were but I took me only a couple of

minutes to realize the importance of these teachings on a grouse moor. He then remembers why Setters and Pointers are supposed to work in a brace and to quarter in “good” wind while crossing their paths. Dogs should work in a brace to better explore the waste ground and, in doing so, they should work together, in harmony, like a team. Teamwork is very important, yet a dog must work independently from his brace mate and, at the same time, support his job and honour his points, these things shall be written in the genes. Dogs shall also be easy to handle so that they could be handled silently (not to disturb the quarry too much) and always be willing to cooperate with the handler. I don’t think I ever read these last two recommendations on any modern books on Setters and Pointers, have these traits lost importance?



I think you can now understand why I find Giulio Colombo's report on Sutton Scotney intriguing and fascinating, but there is more, something personal: like the author, I had the privilege to watch and to take part in British trials, [they mean a lot to me](#), I came back as a different “dog person” and they made me have a “different dog”.

[You can read more on British trials here.](#)

We are Losing Legendary Methods (Fieldwork 3) – By T.

Mostert

Tok Mostert, a Professional Hunter from South Africa, now living in Sweden, is sharing his writings on dog training with us. [You can start reading them from Part 1 here.](#)

We are Losing Legendary Methods (Fieldwork 3) – By T. Mostert

Planting Birds (... & backing)

In hindsight, I should have been able to read Flake better when she was younger. I was so focused on getting her to do what I wanted that I neglected to see the little signs she gave of her natural ability to find birds. I took many photos of her as a pup and now, when I go through them, I find several photos that show she was pointing, or was interested in a bird. Never be so focused on what you want your dog to do, that you forget what the dog can already do. If I had just made the effort to get some help she would be much, much further than she is today, not that I am not happy with where she is today, she is a incredible little dog.

Feather training is one of those things you either believe in or you don't. It is no replacement for birds, but to teach a young dog to be steady and sit to the flush it does have its place. As said before, I made a mistake in teaching Flake to run a pattern simply for the sake of running, instead of giving her a reason to run a pattern. The very first field test I went to was a complete disaster, two days of running on fields and no one bird pointed and believe me she had the opportunity several times. I was basically stuck with a dog that would cut a field to shreds but did not know why she was doing it, running and hunting are not the same thing.



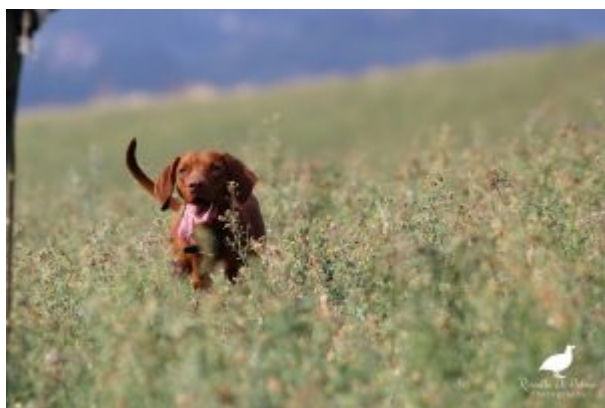
Tok & Flake

This is when I realized I needed some expert help and like we all should do, I looked for the best possible person to help me, a Legend. I also realized I needed my own birds and we built a enclosure and stocked it with some partridge. The first time I met Sten Rönnerling, he was out on a field, he was busy placing out partridge to train his dogs. I had heard of placing out birds, but I had never seen anyone do it. He was a friendly man and by his firm handshake I knew those where not the hands of a talker, he was a doer. Right off the bat he told me to tag along with Flake on a leash while his pointers were running in the field on placed birds. Sure enough his dog went into a solid point and Sten instructed me to bring Flake in, slowly behind the pointer so she could pick up the scent of the bird. I did not notice it, I could not read her yet, but Sten immediately said she has the scent when I was six meters from the pointer, he can read a dog! The pointer flushed on command and they made quick work of dropping the bird from the sky, I gave Flake the sit instruction the moment the bird lifted.

This is how we carried on for several more birds, at one stage we even leashed the pointer while on point to try and slip Flake into his place, the bird flushed by itself and made our plan unsuccessful.

We did this on several occasions, I started using a longer leash so we could slip her in tight to the pointer, it did not take more than 5-10 of these placed birds before Flake understood what was happening. This was the point where Sten decided that she had had enough and that we would or could

turn her into a point stealer if we would have continued slipping her on the pointer, that is experience. What we did now was to follow at a good distance and once the pointer took a solid point we would move on from maybe 150 meters and get Flake to see the side profile of the pointer while on point, the moment she would display backing or mirroring we would stop, some days this would be at even a 100 meters out from the pointer. I need to back-up a little here and make it clear, Flake had already pointed pheasants and grouse before I started with Sten, but this was infrequently and on some days she would simply run right over birds.



Back to Sten. It was the third time I went out to Sten when he decided it was time to place birds for Flake. We placed three partridge out on the field, they were spread pretty far apart, and we let her go. Sure enough, it did not take very long for her to go into a solid point on one of the birds. Here is where placed birds are extremely valuable. I walked up to her slowly and told her to be steady when I was a few meters away, I kept saying steady, steady until I could lay my hand on her and say good girl, girl. Now is the time to heap praise on them, right there and then is the best opportunity to reinforce that what they are doing is what you want them to do! I then took a few steps back and to the side, called her name once and gave her the flush command, while doing this I also moved briskly forward. The bird took to the air and I whistled the sit command. It all fell into place perfectly. She managed to do the same on the other two birds we had placed out.

Two weeks later Sten had a couple of clients from the north of Sweden who came down to work their dogs on birds. He had placed out several birds and there some wild birds in the area too. I was just going to tag along with Flake on a leash to gain more experience. After about a hour the guests' dogs had not found one bird and Sten told me to let Flake off leash and let her run. It took no more than two minutes before she just stopped and went into a solid point. I waited for the guests to get into a suitable shooting formation and once they were in place, I gave Flake the flush command. Up went the bird, whistle, down sat Flake and boom, bird dropped from the sky. Flake had marked the bird and I sent her to retrieve it, good retrieve delivered into my hand. That right there was one of the proudest moments of my entire life! She was finally on her way to becoming a bird dog!

[Continues here...](#)

We are Losing Legendary Methods (Fieldwork 2) – By T. Mostert

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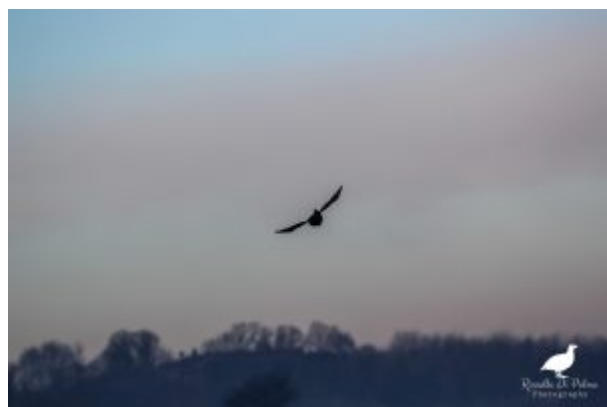
We are Losing Legendary Methods (Fieldwork 2) – By T. Mostert

Depth and Width

There is nothing more gracious than a good dog gliding over a field at full speed, turning at the edges without cutting back

and working a good distance from you without losing contact. Some fields cannot be run edge to edge, it just does not make for a huntable situation, just like some areas do not allow a HPR to run at speed, this happens normally where you have thick cover.

What is acceptable depth and width for a dog to run? It depends on whom you ask and on what terrain you are hunting. I participated in a field test not too long ago during which a dog found and pointed a pheasant for over 4 minutes. The point was maybe 300 meters ahead of the judge and shooter. Judge refused to walk up to the dog and have the pheasant flushed and shot, he said the dog was not hunting for him, it was too far out. I have my own opinion on this particular scenario, and I am sure many others will have too. Point is that what is desired by one handler, is not what suits another.



A good dog will work as far as needed without losing contact with the handler completely, now that is another subjective phrase depending on whom you speak to. I do not mind losing contact with my dog for 2-3 minutes when she is working high

cover or thick cover, I know if she is gone longer she is probably on point. It is for the same reason I do not call her in when I cannot see her, I do not want to break off a possible opportunity. You cannot expect a dog to run the same way in a forest, as he would on a large open wheat stub field. If your dog is not steady on point and cannot stand without flushing the bird by himself, then you probably do not want him to go too deep or too wide, because chances are he will flush the birds before you get there anyway. Do not confuse this with birds that flush by themselves without the dog moving. In short, depth and width should create a huntable situation for the dog and handler. Some dogs will start shallow and short, until they figure out there are no birds close and then start going wider and deeper.

As said before, here and only here is the time to let off on the discipline and obedience a bit. Give the dog some "freedom" and let them work. The dog needs to gain experience and confidence so he can rely on himself. There is no problem with a young dog that sticks close, as his confidence grows he will increase his range. A young dog that runs wild is another issue, here hiding from the dog to force him to keep contact is a good idea.



Flake

I have been extremely fortunate to have a Legend by the name of Sten Rönnerling who has helped me with Flake's training on field. Sten has trained multiple field trials champions in multiple breeds. He had several double and triple champion dogs, a fist full of 10/10 field scores and dogs that have placed high in pointing dogs World Championships. This easily qualifies him as a Legend. He has single handedly helped me turn Flake into a proper field dog that understands what is expected from her. His methods have been tried tested and proven, again and again. At way over 70 years old, he still runs his dogs daily and can still drop a bird from the sky with little effort. When it comes to field training he has a few chosen pieces of advice, one of his first phrases was this:.

" The only time a dog should be standing still on a field is when he is pissing, pooing or pointing".

Young dogs will, at some stage, start pointing rats, mice, rabbits, hare etc. Although this is not what we want them to

do, they are doing what comes naturally, finding game. Do not be too hard on the young dog if he does this, simply break the point as quickly as possible and send the dog in a different direction. Never, never assume it is not feathered game the dog is pointing, always presume it is feathered game until you learn how to read the dog and interpret the signals. Never, never praise the dog on point if you are not 100% sure it is in fact a bird they are pointing! This, as discussed before positively reinforces the dog, but if it is not a bird you are reinforcing him to stand for game and possibly a empty spot where a bird was before, but has long since left (more on that later).

Dogs that stand and route around in one spot are a no, no be patient with a young dog that does this, but get them to move as soon as possible.

Don't run two dogs that want to play with each other on the field, run a experienced dog with a young dog, or run him alone. Different breeds run different ways and look different, Flake ran and hunted her own way when she ran with other dogs, until I ran her with a setter, for some reason she shadowed the setter. I ran her a few times more with the setter and she let go, running her own lines again. Expose your dogs to different breeds on the field. If your dog shows any aggression towards any other dog on the field, pull your dog out, it is a completely unacceptable behaviour.

This is a broad brush I have used to describe field width and depth, there is much more detail that goes into making a dog run well, including external factors like weather, bird density, lack of birds etc.

Find a Legend like Sten to help you, it is incredible what difference it makes.

[The next part will cover how to work a dog on planted birds.](#)

We are Losing Legendary Methods (Fieldwork 1) – By T. Mostert

Tok Mostert, a Professional Hunter from South Africa, now living in Sweden, is sharing his writings on dog training with us. [You can start reading them from Part 1 here.](#)

We are Losing Legendary Methods (Fieldwork 1) – By T. Mostert

This is the single most rewarding discipline for a HPR owner or trainer. Often called the Formula 1 of the dog world, our little “machines” flying over a field, head high and then that sudden dead stop into a rock solid point. A good advance into a sit and the bird gets dropped from the sky, dog marks perfectly, retrieve is brilliant and at the end of the day you get a first prize!! Yeah, I dream too, because getting to this point takes more time and patience than any other disciplines. Many dogs run well, many dogs find birds, many dogs are steady on point, many dogs have a good advance and many still a good retrieve. Putting it all together in ONE DOG is where it gets very, very complicated! Field trials rules, criteria and regulations are different for HPR's in Scandinavia, Europe and the USA, but we all want our dogs to find birds, point them and be steady. I cannot speak for other test methods, I train for our field test and our criteria. Some of what I say will not be applicable to you and it will not make sense in why we do it the way we do it. I don't like ‘kicking up birds” myself and I believe it is easier to have your dog stand still when you ” kick up” birds than to stop a dog after sending him to put the bird on the wing, it does not mean I am right and others are wrong, to each his own. Train within your

framework.



Flake

There are those that believe you give a young dog birds and when he shows potential you teach him to run a proper pattern. I did not do it that way, as said before I was new to this two years ago and I taught Flake to run a pattern long before I got her onto birds on a regular basis. The single biggest problem with my method with the result that Flake ran, she did not hunt, not her mistake, but mine. She was doing what I told her to do and taught her to do. In hindsight I will use a combination of birds and teaching a dog to run a pattern at the same time. A dog that gets “fed” to many birds too early will not run as hard as he should, he will think it is easy hitting birds, more on that later.

To make it more structured, I will start with how to teach a dog to run a pattern and how to correct and steer the dog. I do not start a dog on field training that is too young, joints, ligaments and so on can be permanently damaged! Do not run a too young dog with another young dog, start your dog alone.

Exhaustion is a real danger, low blood sugar (hypoglycemia) and dehydration will kill your dog, learn the signs and keep a close watch. Young dogs rely on their owners to take care of them. Do not train field if you cannot stop or recall your dog, those who are saying “screw you” right now have not seen a dog run over. If you do run them without a stop or recall in place, run them in a fenced area or a area that has no cars or

trains for 5 kms. Finished preaching let's get to patterns.



If someone helps you...

To teach a dog to run a pattern is fairly easy, to teach a dog to run the desired pattern is harder, a dog that can adjust his pattern depending on terrain and prevalent weather conditions is a very smart dog.

I have seen many dogs on trails that are released, run straight ahead of the handler for 200 or 300 meters, then make a left or right turn head out 100-200 meters, turn left or right and head straight back to the handler before they start running a haywire pattern. I have seen dogs run the boundaries of a field only, educated dogs whose handlers trained too hard on the boundaries and not enough on the fields. There is nothing more funny for a young dog to go out and run freely, use that energy by training the dog to run a pattern. One method of doing this is by going to a field that is 50 meters wide and maybe 200 meters long. You can use larger fields, but your dog will run less pattern and you are trying to teach him to run a pattern. It works best with two people or, if you can run and keep running, you can try by yourself, I did a lot of that!

Let's say you have the 50×100 field and you have two people. Always start training with the wind in the dogs face. Start both people and the dog in the centre of the field, release the dog and both people move in opposite directions, each to one side of the field, right at the edge on each side. I like to take a few steps back after I reach my end and then I call

the dog in, this teaches the dog to cover every edge, do not expect a young dog to do this every time by itself. Then I start walking forward on the edge of the field, the other person should be able to see when the dog reaches me after I called him in. They now call the dog to them, remember to keep walking forward! The person that does the call in should not call in too soon or too late, timing is everything. Continue calling in the dog from one person to the other while walking at a steady pace towards the end of the field, the dog will eventually turn by itself. Do not let the dog turn short on either side! Once they start getting tired, they tend to turn short, the person that has the dog closest to them when he turns short should call the dog back! Please, please do not forget to heap praise on the dog when he gets to your side! He is doing what you want him to do! Do not do this for more than 10 minutes with a young dog, take a 30 minute break or longer if you intend repeating the exercise. Do not push the dog too hard in the beginning of its training on field!



Doing the same exercise alone is possible, but harder, I ran from one side to the other with the Flake, she would beat me to the other side every time, I could turn short! I had one advantage with Flake when I started pattern training, she could

already take directions with hand signals (arms) and with the whistle. A judge once told me that a dog cannot read arm signals, he is wrong. Some dogs take to the pattern easy, some dogs take a little more time and some dogs just don't get taught right. A dog that enjoys your company will follow you, no matter how hard he runs, he will keep an eye on you every now and then, a young dog even more so. Use this, when the dog reaches a point where you are happy for him to turn, turn and walk in the opposite direction (always forward), make sure your back is to the dog, do not walk backwards! You do not need to be as fast as the dog, if he passes you keep walking

in the same direction until the dog reaches your chosen turning point, turn and walk in the opposite direction.

[To be continued with depth and width.](#)

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.



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 Ponzio	Guide: Fabio		
Juges: S. Bianconi (P) W. Jost N. Kassianidis			
Couple	Nom du chien	Sex Conducteur	Resultat
1	Erode della Bassa Reggina Daar del Zagnis	m V. Antimo m F. Rosselli	2. MB
2	Balboa Zagni del Duda Morinensis Casper	m G. Pezzotta m M. Mori	
3	Cheyenne Dendaberi Neron	m G. Ferrari m F. Gomez	1. MB
4	Amor od Pastorcic Dalerik Aramis	m L. Pastorcic m D. Cominotti	
5	Max del Zagnis Casper de Ademar	m F. Rosselli m F. Gomez	
6	Lavezzi del Zagnis Hard Ambrofellis	f G. Pezzotta m M. Iazzetta	
7	One Dream Kosmas Casper Malcottinensis Rock	m K. Panagiottis m D. Cominotti	
8	Percha de Bosende Bajron moreno del Zagnis	f F. Gomez m G. Pezzotta	
9	Ciro Sirtouf Atos	m K. Panagiottis m M. Caramanti	
10	Lem (detto Rochy) Adrenalina del Zagnis	m A. Mariani f G. Pezzotta	
11	Atom del Sassovivo Carpin de Ademar	m L. Pastorcic m F. Gomez	
12	Alex Dalerik Big	m K. Panagiottis 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. Gerzinc D. Gouzounas			
Couple	Nom du chien	Sex Conducteur	Resultat
1	Ciak del Zagnis Pianigiani's Ford	m Z. Nikolic m St. Pianigiani	1. Ecc CAC/CACIT
2	Ami Cicco du Tourbillon blanc Dac de Playbarri	m S. Meili m J.L. Diaz	Ecc
3	Marzale's History D'O Akron del Tremelano	m E. Trajkov m Z. Nikolic	
4	Cyrano du Tourbillon blanc Rajna od Karaotoka	m S. Meili f J. Zekanovic	
5	Ali del Tamerlano Bruss	m Z. Nikolic m P. Patrizzi	2. Ecc
6	Diazarranza Hugo Diana	m J.L. Diaz f E. Trajkov	
7	Brandan del Zagnis Pianigiani's Lori	m Z. Nikolic f St. Pianigiani	
8	Pirio od Gastona Marzale's Hogan	m J. Zekanovic m E. Trajkov	MB MB
9	Braco du Tourbillon blanc Apasch del Zagnis	m F. Feurté f Z. Nikolic	
10	Fren Pige od Gastona	m E. Trajkov m J. Zekanovic	
11	Torres del Zagnis Pianigiani's Jilgen	m Z. Nikolic m St. Pianigiani	
12	Arno Rex del Faenor	m J. Zekanovic 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 signature: Gerzic

Couple No Nom du chien Sex Conducteur Resultat

1	Atom del Sassovivo Ciro Sirtouf	m m	L. Pastorcic K. Panagiottis	
2	Carpin de Ademar Lem (detto Rochy)	m m	F. Gomez A. Mariani	Ecc
3	Alex Adrenalina del Zagnis	m f	K. Panagiottis G. Pezzotta	
4	Hard Ambroffellis Dalerik Big	m m	M. Iazzetta D. Cominotti	Ecc
5	Atos Bajron moreno del Zagnis	m m	M. Caramanti G. Pezzotta	1. Ecc CAC/CACIT
6	One Dream Kosmas Casper Morinensis Casper	m m	K. Panagiottis M. Mori	
7	Max del Zagnis Percha de Bosende	m f	F. Rosselli F. Gomez	
8	Malcottinensis Rock Lavezzi del Zagnis	m f	D. Cominotti G. Pezzotta	2. Ecc RCAC/RCACIT
9	Amor od Pastorcic Casper de Ademar	m m	L. Pastorcic F. Gomez	Ecc
10	Dalerik Aramis Balboa Zagni del Duda	m m	D. Cominotti G. Pezzotta	3. Ecc
11	Erode della Bassa Reggina Cheyenne	m f	V. Antimo G. Ferrari	
12	Dendaberri Neron Daar del Zagnis	m m	F. Gomez 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: Kassianidis

Couple No Chien Nom du chien Sex Conducteur

1	Arno Masche del Zagnis	m m	J. Zekanovic Z. Nikolic	
2	Rex del Faenor Fren	m m	J. L. Sanz E. Trajkov	
3	Pianigiani's Jilgen Apasch del Zagnis	m f	St. Pianigiani Z. Nikolic	
4	Pique od Gastona Braco du Tourbillon blanc	m m	J. Zekanovic F. Feurté	
5	Marzale's Hogan Brandan del Zagnis	m m	E. Trajkov Z. Nikolic	
6	Pirlo od Gastona Pianigiani's Lori	m f	J. Zekanovic St. Pianigiani	
7	Diazarranza Hugo Ali del Tamerlano	m m	J.L. Diaz Z. Nikolic	
8	Diana Cyrano du Tourbillon blanc	f m	E. Trajkov S. Meili	2. MB
9	Rajna od Karaotoka Ciak del Zagnis	f m	J. Zekanovic Z. Nikolic	
10	Marzale's History D'O Ami Cicco du Tourbillon blanc	m m	E. Trajkov S. Meili	1. Ecc
11	Bruss Akron del Tremelano	m m	P. Patrizzi Z. Nikolic	
12	Pianigiani's Ford Dac de Playabarri	m m	St. Pianigiani J.L. Diaz	

Results Day 1

Results Day 1

On steadiness (... and obedience!)

As soon as Briony became steady to flush I, full of pride, posted some videos on Facebook. The road that brought us to steadiness was a long one, I was extremely happy to have reached what, months early, seemed to be unattainable. Briony was originally purchased to be my personal shooting dog and indeed she became a good one. She knew how to locate birds, point, be steady on point and retrieve the killed ones but, like all the Italian shooters, I did not even think to make her steady to wing and shot. I simply did not care and she spent years "chasing" after the bird was produced, until I realized she was good enough to run in field trials.

The videos uploaded slowly but, minutes after they became visible to the public, I began receiving several private messages. Those messages, in the weeks and months ahead, became questions asked face to face. People wanted to know if I used an e-collar, or if I shoot her in the butt, a very popular method suggested by many (in)famous trainers. My answer was that steadiness derived from obedience, an answer puzzled most of the listeners. They could not believe that the tools I used were a lead, a check cord and a whistle, and the few humans who did believe me asked me to make miracles: a woman sort of wanted me to make is HPR steady overnight using the internet!



I do not have superpowers, but maybe my mentor does, as a matter of fact he is widely known as the “Shaman”, or as “White Feather”. White Feather (from here on WF) has been knowing me for a very long time: I was one of his students at the three months class (!!!) to become a certificate stalker (deer, roe buck, fallow deer, boar...) and he taught me during the course I attended to become a certified biometric data

collector (we measure and establish the age of stalked and hunted game). He saw me and interacted with me several times during trials, gatherings, conferences and so... yet, before accepting to "train" me, he wanted to meet me again and look at me under a different light. Our first formal meeting happened over a cup of espresso, we were seated at table by the street, Briony was on lead and a cat passed by: I prevented any possible reactions and he appreciated that, a training session was scheduled for the following day.

I have to admit I was a little worried, the man was Elena Villa's (that woman won all she could win with GSPs, in Italy and abroad) mentor, he was a well known retired gamekeeper and he had owned, trained, judged and handled hundreds of dogs and shoot over them, in Italy, Germany, Austria and several Eastern European countries. But, most of all, he, himself, probably had the most amazing mentor Italy gave birth to. Born at the end of 1800, Giacomo Griziotti (in my city there are a street and a college dorm in his name) is still deemed to be one of the best judges, handlers, trainers and writers involved with pointing breeds. His first and only book, despite being expensive and hard to find, is still regarded as the Bible, no wonder I was both excited and worried! WF wanted to test me and Briony, if we had passed the test he would have trained us for free, but we had to be perceived to be a good cause.



After another espresso (we both like coffee), we moved to the training ground and I had my first shocking lesson on the meaning of “obedience”. I opened the car and Briony’s cage to let her out. WF quickly made us clear that she could not leave the cage, nor the car without his permission. During the following months, his permission became “my permission”; she had to learn to sit and stay if I had to cross a ditch and then come later, if and when called. While all my friends were enjoying their shooting season, me and Briony were practicing sit/stay/come/drop to whistle daily, whatever the weather and the place. We trained in the countryside, in the city, in the shops, with or without stimuli. It was hard and even depressing: I spent months studying fish inspection for my veterinary degree and practicing sit/stay/drop!



But then it came the day. Not only Briony was dropping to whistle, she was also steady to game and she had become an obedient and reliable dog (and I passed my fish inspection exam as well). Trials came next and all the hard and boring work brought to fruition, but this is another story. At the moment I am still incredulous and proud to be part to such a long standing gundog training tradition.

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

□