

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](#)!

Una gemma dal 1956: un italiano ai trials inglesi

Come alcuni di voi già sanno, ho ereditato l'archivio del Dr. Ridella, veterinario e allevatore di setter con l'affisso Ticinensis. Mi sento onorata di essere stata scelta come custode di questi materiali, ma mi rincresce ammettere che ne ho ripulito e ordinato solo metà delle riviste. Tuttavia, circa 50 anni di editoria cino-venatoria, sono oggi ben archiviati e leggibili. Sapendo ciò, un amico mi ha chiesto di trovargli due articoli di Solaro del 1938 e del 1954 che, ovviamente, non sono riuscita ad individuare. Non dandomi per vinta, ho controllato anche gli anni limitrofi, niente da fare, ma ho trovato qualcosa di estremamente affascinante ed inatteso. Nel numero del secondo trimestre di Rassegna Cinofila (è l'antenato dei Nostri Cani) del 1956, c'è un bell'articolo di Giulio Colombo (1886-1966). Per chi non lo conoscesse, Colombo era allevatore con affisso della Baita, nonché un noto giudice. Aveva sempre cercato di tenere vivi i legami tra Italia e Gran Bretagna e l'Italia importando, tra gli altri i setter: **Lingfield Mystic** (vincitore del Derby inglese); **Lingfield Ila**, **Lingfield Puma** e **Bratton Vanity**.



Grazie all'articolo, ho scoperto che nel 1956, Colombo è andato a giudicare a **Sutton Scotney** (Hampshire – UK) e ha raccontato la esperienza. L'articolo è leggibile per intero nel [PDF che potete scaricare qui](#) o nella photogallery [qui linkata](#). Ne riporterò però qui alcuni pezzi salienti.

Colombo comincia pensando a Laverack, Llewellyn e Lady

Auckland (che giudicava con lui) e con un excursus storico che spiega come mai setter e pointer siano stati selezionati in questa maniera. *“Credo aver, inteso i due Grandi sussurrare a un dipresso così: Competizioni di giganti le nostre, quando ancora si credeva alla necessità del cane da ferma sul terreno della caccia, quando pointers e setters rispondevano al gusti venatori del cacciatore, quando non si codificava un bel niente a priori, teoricamente, per estetismi o postulati da tavolino senza aver vissuta o sofferta mai la, passione incontenibile dello sport codaio, fra le più strenue ed inebrianti passioni, quando pointers e setters, cani da Grande Cerca, si imposero selezionati perfezionati, secondo suggeriva la pratica diuturna di lunghe stagioni venatorie con l’esperienza del terreno e dei selvatico, a servizio del fucile vagante, e si stabilì la macchina animale perfetta, collaudata con formula aderente alla realtà per quel terreno e quel selvatico, e conquistò il mondo intero quella macchina intelligente, tanto che nati Inghilterra pointers e setters furon poi cittadini di ogni Paese.”*

Non credo ci sia molto da aggiungere, poi continua con la descrizione dettagliata del lavoro che essi sono chiamati a fare: *“II cacciatore ragionò così: di fronte a me la pianura sconfinata, ondeggiante di mammelloni di grani, di stoppie, di prati, di eriche, faticosa, lenta da per correre tutta scarpinando da coltivo a coltivo, da spiaggia a spiaggia in traccia delle compagnie di starne e grouses discoste le une dalle altre in famiglia ciascuna col proprio pascolo, e le lunghe pause senza incontri e senza sparare scoraggiano anche il cacciatore più caparbio: a me occorre un ausiliare speciale anzi una pariglia di tali, dall’olfatto possente, cerca indefessa. dalla ferma statica, dalla guidata corta, che a galoppo spinto per accorciare le distanze, nel tempo breve per la nostra passione da crepuscolo a crepuscolo, risparmiando a me ciechi e fortunosi passi, concludano spicci su grouses e su starne e magari su lepre sorniona; e perché io possa sparare a visuale libera senza tema, giù, a terra proni a frullo e*

E affinché l'intesa fra i due ausiliari fosse concorde, con rispetto della fatica e della autorità di ciascuno e l'uno approfittasse dei risultati concreti dell'altro, ecco che mentre l'uno dei cani bloccava col rito della ferma l'altro non persisteva ad esplorare, ma sostava immobile simulando a sua volta la ferma per mimetismo conscio e istintivo, per collaborazione atavica fra gli animali ida preda, e il segugio accorre scagnando all'indicazione sonora e Drake rispetta la ferma non sua ed ecco codificata la pratica del consenso, indispensabile con ausiliari che trescano veloci e lontani.

*E siccome il selvatico tiene udito sensibilissimo, abolito ogni richiamo a voce o col fischio, cenni della mano al cane che di tanto in tanto sbircia al padrone per interpretarne le intenzioni, quindi tacita intesa fra cacciatore ed ausiliare, l'uno per l'altro. E quando s'ha da interrompere l'azione, un sibilo e i cani al terra, docili al guinzaglio e si inaugurò il **drop** e il **down**, non accademia da recinto, ma freno in terreno libero. Col tempo per emulazione fra scuderie, per sane rivalità sportive fra amatori di razze affini a chi tiene i l miglior cane con olfatto più potente a corsa più veloce e reazioni più pronte, nacque in un paese di scommesse, il cane da gara, il Trialler, via col vento, cane da Sport, ma riproduttore che rifornisca i ranghi per cacciare starne e grouses e non lepri e conigli, in terreno vasto e non negli scampoli di grano."*

Qui viene espresso in dettaglio il lavoro "ideale" dei cani inglesi e le motivazioni pratiche che stanno dietro a queste pretese. Leggendo questi paragrafi sento ancora più la mancanza delle mie esperienze britanniche, perché da loro le cose sono rimaste all'incirca come descritte qui. Se non avessi prima visto, e poi partecipato ai loro trials, sarei un cinofilo diverso, avrei un cane diverso ma... devo ammettere che sono contenta di quello che sono! Segue qualche notizia sulle regole del gioco, con riflessioni sui pro e sui contro delle diverse regole: "In Inghilterra non si redige relazione alcuna,

non si concede qualifica, si comunica l'ordine di classifica dal primo al quarto con una riserva, e stop, i concorrenti tanto intelligenti da valutare da sé gli errori dei propri allievi senza sentirseli ricordare per iscritto postumo dal Giudice e talmente sportivi da comprendere che se il Giudice ha creduto di disporre i cani in un dato ordine progressivo è ozioso recriminare e voler sostituire tante altre classifiche quanti concorrenti e spettatori, ognuna diversa dall'altra, ma tutte quante più oculate, più cognite, più probanti, più sapute, più pettegole di quella ufficiale!"

Non ci sta minuto di tolleranza, assurda nostrana indulgenza che consente al cane di dimostrare le proprie attitudini a far frullare, a rifiutare il consenso, a rincorrere, a beffare il conduttore, senza che il Giudice possa prenderne atto, coll'eventualità magari di non aver mai più durante il turno il cane occasione di ripetere quanto è suo costume perpetrare di norma, e frodare magari un premio con relativa qualifica bugiarda.

Nemmeno si tiene conto di un lasso di tempo prestabilito per la prova: allorché il Giudice opina di essersi fatto un concetto probante del lavoro dei cani taglia corto, e su questo si potrebbe discutere, perché un minimo di percorso è più equo a garanzia delle probabilità comuni, eccetto per gli errori da squalifica. Vigè il sistema dei richiami protratti con confronti ripetuti, con pericolo di dover sul finire della gara modificare da capo una classifica già plausibile"

Se volete saperne di più sulle differenze tra le prove italiane e quelle britanniche, potete andare a [leggerle qui](#). Faccio una breve riflessione sull'abitudine inglese di non avere relazioni a fine prova: Colombo dice che il pubblico spesso tende a saperne di più del giudice. Persone che, pur stando a centinaia di metri dal cane, vedono e prevedono errori che sfuggono (secondo loro) ai giudici! Credevo che negli anni '50 il pubblico fosse più , come dire, sobrio ma apparentemente l'arte di attribuire errori inesistenti ai cani

degli altri ha radici antiche. Colombo poi racconta del **Derby** (non so se fosse identico all'attuale Puppy Derby, per soggetti sotto ai 2 anni) e non ho capito se i cani correvano a singolo o in coppia, siccome menziona poi le Brace Stakes (in coppia). "Nel complesso del lavoro nel **Derby** constatai qualche fase di dettaglio, insistenze su orme, qualche consenso stentato a comando, senza partecipazione né formale né conscia all'azione; Nota del Concorso presente in alcuni esemplari, ma frenata da frequenti incontri di fagiano, lepri e conigli, scarse le starne, e deplorabile il coniglio soprattutto, che conta è la starna, per fagiani basta il cocker. Punte in profondità. ritorni all'interno come in Coppa Europa, qualche intemperanza di richiami come da noi. Soggetti a corto di preparazione per il maltempo, alcuni veramente di classe, ma non superiore nel complesso alla nostra attuale. Primo **Lenwade Wizard**, pointer di Mr. Arthur Rank, di 15 mesi, stilista, corretto, galoppo sciolto, risolutivo sull'incontro. Secondo **Lenwade Whisper**, pointer di Messrs P. P. Wayre's e G. F. Jolly's, di 15 mesi, con buon percorso, benché lacets troppo compatti e qualche incertezza nell'indicazione."

Seguono accenni alla Brace Stake: "Le **Brace Stakes** videro presenti due Setters, irlandesi, **Sulhamstead Bey d'Or** e **F. T. Sulhamstead Basil d'Or**. Basil soggetto rimarchevole, con reazioni pronte e buon olfatto, impegno e buon galoppo, qualche incertezza e ritorni all'interno, ferma e guida con espressione, consente, bene in mano, ben condotto, surclassa il compagno Bey e si aggiudica per proprio esclusivo merito il secondo premio, trattenuto il primo, della pariglia."

Alla **All Aged Stake** era stato iscritto anche un weimaraner che poi non si è presentato. Colombo disquisisce sul far correre un continentale insieme a degli inglesi: "non avendo visto il Weimaraner sul lavoro non posso affermare se fosse o no nera Nota del Concorso dl Setters e Pointers, superflua qualsiasi meraviglia dal momento che corrono da noi diversi Kurzhaar ed Epagneuls perfettamente nella Nota della Grande Cerca assai

più di qualche esponente di razza inglese; gli inglesi, con meno ipocrisia e più raziocinio, dal momento che alcuni continentali filano all'inglese, li fanno correre con gli inglesi; la Grande Cerca non è questione di coda lunga o corta, ma di garretti, olfatto reagendo, e non è escluso che un giorno i Continentali, italiani compresi, corrano a Grande Cerca, e pointers e setters a Cerca ristretta."

Dopodiché tira le somme su quanto visto nel corso delle prove: *"in Inghilterra la Grande Cerca non è più professata e sentita come un tempo, in un ambiente dove il cane da ferma è in crisi gravissima di impiego eccetto che alcuni pochi attivissimi Sportsmen fedeli alla formula antica; che è la prassi impiegata per correre la Grande Cerca che si allontana oggi in Inghilterra, o quantomeno a Sutton Scotney, non dal modello continentale ma da quello stesso descritto e commentato dagli Autori inglesi, praticato per il passato e introdotto poi sul continente: turni a singhiozzo, interruzioni di percorso per battere porzioni limitate, della pur vasta area, sfruttamento di appezzamenti, di scampoli di terreno percorribili in qualche minuto, assolutamente inadatti allo sviluppo della cerca in grande e anzi in contrasto con la cerca dinamica e veloce pertanto che nota personalità inglese ebbe a definire alcuni: turni da Springers; si tollerano dai conduttori troppe fasi di dettaglio e si ammettono lunghe guidate inespressive con schizzo finale di lepre e coniglio considerate valide, e niente sta ad attestare la possibilità di pistaggio che il Trialler naso al vento deve trascurare non essendo suo compito preoccuparsene; si dimentica spesso che il consenso è attivo, partecipante, solidale con il cane in ferma e non rinunciatorio e passivo per obbedienza; non si reprimono sempre i ritorni all'interno e si tarpa talora l'azione del cane di lato costringendolo a percorso inadeguato allo scopo*

stesso della velocità.”



Il cane da ferma era in decadenza in Gran Bretagna nel 1956? Non lo so, non c'ero, quello che posso intuire da letture passate ed esperienze presenti è che la realtà venatoria britannica era (ed è) completamente diversa dalla nostra [come potete leggere cliccando qui](#). La loro gestione faunistica-venatoria ha indubbiamente favorito spaniels e retrievers, a scapito dei cani da ferma. Probabilmente, nel 1956, i cani da ferma erano comunque cani di nicchia e in stagnazione, mentre da noi si assisteva ad una sorta di ascesa della caccia con il cane da ferma, gli inglesi in particolare. Innanzitutto la Grande Cerca intesa da Colombo nel 1956 era molto diversa dalla Grande Cerca attuale ma... gli inglesi hanno mai avuto una vera e propria Grande Cerca? Non ricordo nulla di specifico ad opera di autori inglesi. Non dico che non sia mai stata descritta, dico che non ne ho mai letto e mi piacerebbe leggerne su uno dei testi a cui fa riferimento Colombo, senza però indicarne i nomi. Mi piacerebbe poter conversare con lui e capire, capire cosa intendessero gli inglesi – secondo lui – per Grande Cerca e capire la sua visione. La sua visione, in fondo la conosciamo, non possiamo certo dimenticare che il cane ideale per Colombo era velocissimo, dalla cerca estrema, dal naso superlativo. Lo chiamava “il puro”, il “folle” e in **“Trialer! Saggio di Cinofilia Venatoria” (1950)** lo definiva: **“Il Riproduttore, Il Capolavoro, il quadro d'Autore, il brillante di cinquanta grani, l'oro zecchino. E' il Capodanno, non gli altri 364 giorni.”** La cinofilia italiana è stata

profondamente influenzata dalla visione di Colombo, ma non quella britannica e, come dicevo sopra, non sono nemmeno certa che inizialmente fosse indirizzata in quella direzione. [In ogni caso mi sono rimessa a leggere Arkwright a piccoli passi].

Turni da spaniel. Interruzioni di percorsi, terreni questionabili, lunghe fasi di dettaglio, lunghe guidate eccetera, le ho viste? Ni. Ho seguito e partecipato ad almeno 20 trials, forse di più, e ho visto alcune delle cose di cui racconta Colombo ma andava sempre così. Molto andava a discrezione dei giudici e dei guardiacaccia (è il guardiacaccia che ti dice dove puoi fare il turno!) e il livello dei cani era variegato. Non so come fosse la situazione a Sutton Stockney ma, in certi trials a grouse si corrono in mezzo a densità di selvatici impressionanti. Non è che si possano fare chissà quali percorsi. I consensi a comando? Li chiedono ancora anche se un consenso naturale è molto apprezzato e si sta lavorando in questo senso. Tirando le somme, comunque, credo che Giulio Colombo [si aspettasse di assistere a qualcosa di diverso](#) e sia rimasto un po' spiazzato. Ciò nonostante, Colombo non era uno stupido e ammette egli stesso che anche un giudice britannico potrebbe non essere colpito sempre in positivo dai trials italiani: *"Benchè una sola prova controllata da me non possa fornirmi indice probante del complesso di un materiale setter e pointer, esiguo come numero nei confronti dell'italiano e francese, da quella sola gara di Sutton Scotney (dovrei dedurne una netta decadenza rispetto alla nostra; mi guardo dal farlo: probabilmente un Giudice inglese avrebbe la stessa impressione da alcuni turni nostrani alla Cattanea, a Borgo d'Ale ed Alice Castello."*

Il nostro inviato ammette altresì di aver visto, oltre a cani meno buoni, anche cani buoni: *"Se alcuni concorrenti si palesarono tassativamente negativi al compito del Trialler, altri al limite quattro pointers almeno, due setters inglesi e*

un irlandese furono in tal classe da doverli rammaricare dal non poterli rivedere mai più. Fra i premiati **Seguntium Niblick**, pointer di Mr. J. Alun Roberts, di due anni, primo, velocissimo, sicuro sull'incontro, senso del selvatico. **Scotney Gary**, pointer di Mr. Arthur Rank, due anni, velocissimo, stilista, senso del selvatico, olfatto, secondo; **Scotney Solitaire**, pointer di Mr. Arthur Rank, di non ancora due anni, tutto nella Nota, testa alta, corretto, olfatto, reazioni, terzo; **Sulhamstead Basil d'Or**, irlandese, impegno, testa alta, corretto, quarto; **Ch. Downsmans Bracken**, setter inglese, dalle reazioni rapide, le ferme schiacciate slittando, lunghe e significative, infortunato su starne durante un rispetto di lepre, quinto. E lo indiavolato **Sulhamstead Nina d'Or**, setter irlandese di Mrs. Nagle's e Miss M. Clarcks's, di non ancora l'anno, partito su lepre, e quello inglesino blu belton dalla cerca ampia, avida, **Flashaway Eve**, del Col. A. S. Dalding's, di non ancora due anni, che tende al fuori mano sul fianco, ma possiede tanta avidità e stile setter e galoppo radente da presagirne un Campione, se ben condotto." Condivido appieno, la mia esperienza è identica alla sua: accanto a cani poco stilisti e lenti, ci sono soggetti che non sfigurerebbero anche alle nostre prove: in 60 anni è cambiato poco.



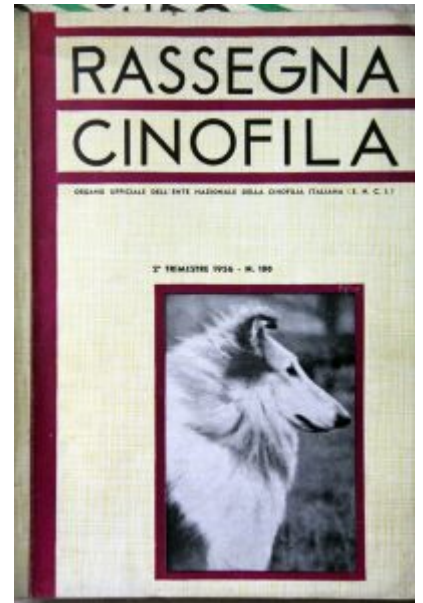
L'articolo di Colombo si chiude così: "Ma da Oltre Manica si importarono pointers e setters eccelsi, ma oltre Manica vige

ancora sangue di **Dero 4° del Trasimeno** di Vignoli, sangue ricordato, vantato, e scorre nelle vene del secondo classificato, **Scotney Gary**, sangue che emigrò anche in America per ritornare in Inghilterra; e **Blakfield Gide** di Waldemar Marr, sorellastra di **Fast**, e **Galf di S. Patrick** di Nasturzio, sono citati in Inghilterra, paese per niente sciovinista, fra i migliori e più validi riproduttori, ed esponenti dei Pointer in quegli allevamenti: ricordiamolo anche noi.

Da "Rassegna " ringrazio **Mr. e Mrs Bank, Lady Auckland**, il Segretario Generale del Kennel Club Inglese **Mr. Buckley, Mr. Binney, Mr. e Mrs. Mac Donald Daly, Mr. e Mrs. William Wiley, Mr. Lovel Clifford** mio valido interprete, che mi furon prodighi di ospitalità ed attenzioni durante il breve, ma denso soggiorno in- Inghilterra. Formulo il voto che la passione del Trialter non venga mai meno nella Patria Augusta del Signore l'Aria!" [Chi volesse leggerlo per intero [può scaricarlo qui](#)].

Ho deciso di parlare di questo articolo perché ritengo contenga dei punti chiave utili anche al lettore contemporaneo. Quali sono? Mi piace innanzitutto che apra con un excursus storico che spiega come si siano evolute le razze da ferma inglesi. Sono il frutto di particolari selvatici e di particolari terreni. Sono il frutto della caccia in quelle circostanze, circostanze che ne hanno plasmato il temperamento e codificato il metodo di lavoro. Prima che esistessero le prove, esisteva la caccia, esisteva il cacciatore che, a fronte di situazioni di caccia complesse, volevano tornare a casa con qualcosa nella cacciatora. Le circostanze hanno subito reso chiari quali fossero i tratti da selezionare e i comportamenti graditi, nonché tutto ciò che doveva essere considerato difetto. I cani andavano a caccia e poi, se bravi, venivano presentati anche alle prove. Un tempo era così anche in Italia e... vorrei fosse rimasto tale. Oggi abbiamo Campioni di Lavoro che non sono mai stati a caccia, che sono di proprietà (o persino condotti ed addestrati) da gente che non

pratica attivamente la caccia con il cane da ferma, o che la pratica in contesti e su selvatici che si discostano da condizioni ideali e probanti. Questo porta anche a non comprendere alcuni regolamenti nati tanti anni fa, e a fare confusione su quali siano i comportamenti corretti da parte del cane, eppure costoro spesso si ritengono "esperti". Se rileggete le parole di Colombo vedrete quanto stima il fermo al frullo, il **down** e il **drop**, definendoli **"non accademia da recinto, ma freno in terreno libero"**, beh nella nostra penisola sono ancora abbastanza fraintesi. Non so se Colombo sia stato anche a trials su grouse ma la sottoscritta ha impiegato pochi minuti sul moor a capire che lì, questi insegnamenti sono indispensabili. Colombo ricorda anche l'importanza del percorso, del saper stare sul vento e del lavoro in coppia. Lavoro in coppia che deve essere armonico, di squadra facendo capo a caratteristiche che devono essere nella genetica del cane. I cani devono anche essere facili da condurre, collegati e disponibili a collaborare con la minima necessità di ordini sonori, o i selvatici sarebbero disturbati troppo. Questi appunti mancano in tanti libri di cinofilia venatoria moderna, hanno forse questi tratti perso importanza?



Credo ora abbiate capito perché io ritenga il resoconto di Colombo su Sutton Scotney affascinante ed intrigante. Poi si aggiunge qualcosa di personale: proprio come lui, ho avuto modo di assistere (e prendere parte) ai British Trial e [essi significano molto per me.](#) Mi hanno trasformato in un cinofilo "diverso" e mi hanno consentito di avere un cane "diverso".

[Per saperne di più sulla cinofilia britannica cliccate qui.](#)

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 B**

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 bracemate 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 nonexistent 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."

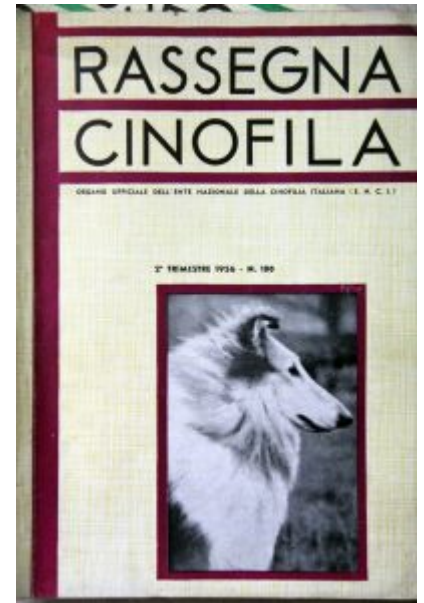
So, I really wonder whether any British authors had ever outlined such a dog, or whether Colombo just believed an hypothetical British author did or, again, whether he misunderstood some writings (he did not read English, as far as I know). So, basically, I think he was [expecting something different](#) 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 ones 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 tanks 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.](#)

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.