

## Field Trials Today by Steve Robinson

Due to bad weather and COVID-19 restrictions, the last Irish Setter Breed Stake was held was on 19<sup>th</sup> & 20<sup>th</sup> of July 2017, with kind permission of Lord Masham, on the Swinton Moors, North Yorkshire.

The Breed Stake of any pointing breed (be it Irish Red Setter, Pointer, Gordon Setter or English Setter) is an important trial for the devotees of each breed. Not only does it showcase the working ability of our chosen breed, but also how popular the breed is and the depth of its working quality. In addition to the Breed Stake, the Novice and Open Stakes also held over the 2 days, lets us see how the Irish Red Setter's working performance and ability compares to that of the English & Gordon Setters and the Pointers.

Entrants over the 2 days there were;

28 Irish Red Setters 9 English Setters 12 Gordon Setters 27 Pointers

Referring to Bob Truman's article above, the comments he makes about sportsmanship and standards still hold very true today. By sheer coincidence, my trialling experience started the year that Bob wrote his article. I found that the established trialers and big names of the day, such as Colin and Julie Organ, Colin being a professional trainer and handler; Wilson Young and Bettie Town, both pictured above; Billy Darragh, a Red Setter man to the core; Richard MacNicol, Morris Getty, Will Sloan, and several others, were beyond generous to me. Sharing their advice, information, training tips, judging guidance and etiquette. Colin Organ very quickly became a great friend and mentor to me, he has many years of shooting experience over dogs, and his knowledge of how to manage the day with a focus on the safety of the dogs, handler, and guns are of great importance. Especially when our trials are based and judged as a shooting day would be conducted. Any handlers aspiring to judge trials could do no better than spend time listening to their advice. Sadly, though, some of these great characters are no longer with us today.

I remember on one occasion, Wilson saying to me, "all we are doing is standing on the shoulders of giants," and that is as true today as it was 27 years ago. We need to actively give our time, help and advice to anyone



Steve with his incredible 6 FT Ch's, KC Names from Left to Right  
FtCh Tiquin Ember / FtCh Lusca Fizz / FtCh Coldcoats Corbally Boy /  
FtCh Coldcoats Star / FtCh Lusca Ripp / FtCh Tiquin Joey

who is interested in working Setters and Pointers, so the sport we love can carry on.

I worry at the moment at the width of the gene pool for working Irish Setters over here as there is limited choice if you have a bitch as to what sire options are available to you, without getting too tightly line bred, one very useful tool is Kennel Clubs breed coefficient, this gives you a percentage of line breeding to aim for, you enter the name of the sire and dam of the potential mating and up the percentage pops, giving you a steer as to if your looking in the right direction or not. One factor to bear in mind with this tool though, is that if the dog or bitch is imported then our Kennel Club only uses the information generated from a 3-generation pedigree.

## Field Trial Report 2020

Well what a strange year it has been for all of us. A year ago we were just into the first lockdown and I did not envisage that a year later we would be in the same situation.

The decision was taken to cancel the Spring partridge trials because of the pandemic.

Our judges David Hall and Barbara Smith agreed to carry forward their appointments to 2021.

In May the FT committee, along with all the other Setter and Pointer Field Trial clubs, made the decision to cancel the Summer trials. This was in light of the Kennel Club recommendations re KC events in the Covid-19 pandemic, and the uncertainties of what would happen. We felt it was not appropriate to hold the trials in the uncertain times.

We are indebted to the landowners and gamekeepers for their continued support and generosity in allowing us access to their land for the trials.

Although there were no Field Trials we were still able to work our dogs on the moors doing grouse counting. The game keepers like to know how the birds have bred and what numbers they have. Grouse only breed in the wild so many factors can affect them, especially the weather. It is also good training for the dogs and keeps them fit.

Now into 2021 we are in lockdown again. With the road map plan we thought we might be able to hold the Spring partridge trials in starting 14<sup>th</sup> April. It would be classed as an outdoor sport that hopefully from 12<sup>th</sup> April would be able to take place. The main problem was accommodation for people to stay in, B&B, hotels etc. would not be open. Plus, things could change and restrictions may not be lifted by that date. So the decision was made again to cancel the trials.

We are hopeful for the summer grouse trials though, which start on 12<sup>th</sup> July. The ISAE/S&P trials to be held on the Swinton estate near Masham, North Yorkshire, are on 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> July 2021, by kind permission of Lord Masham. Full details will be available nearer the date when the schedule is available.

A little information about setter and pointer field trials for you.

The trials are held in circuits throughout the year, unlike other gundog subgroups who have regular trials all over the country during their season.

Setter and Pointer trials are held in 4 circuits blocks.

1. Spring Grouse trials at the end of March for about 12 days held on moors in the North of England, Perthshire and the Highlands.

2. Spring Partridge trials in the middle of April for about 10 days held on winter wheat fields in Cambridgeshire/Suffolk.

3. Summer Grouse trials from middle of July to just before 12<sup>th</sup> August.

The first half held on moors in North Yorkshire/Co. Durham, second half in the Scottish Highlands/Borders.

4. Autumn Partridge trials held on stubble fields in North Norfolk.

The stakes held are a combination of Puppy (under 2years old), Novice, All Aged, Open and Single breed Open.

If anyone wishes to attend the trials to watch they are most welcome, they just need to ask the FT secretary of the trial they wish to attend.

For judges working towards awarding CCs they need to attend an Open stake to appreciate the work and the conformation required for the breed to do the job. Please contact me if you are interested and want to know more, I can give you all the relevant information.

If anyone is interested in learning more about the working side and training their dog there are people who can help and give advice, particularly the members of the field trial sub committee.

On the Kennel Club website there is a section on Field Trials and lots of information for anyone new to the sport. I also recommend you familiarise yourself with The Kennel Club Field Trial (J) regulations, which is available online from the Kennel Club website, this will explain the different stakes and what is expected of a dog in a trial etc.

I look forward to hopefully seeing some of you in the Summer up on the moors.

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