

## Report on the 170th FCRS 12-Dog Novice Stake, held at Old Hemploe Shoot, Elkington, Northamptonshire.

The 170th Society Field Trial took place on 1st November 2017. We had a full card and the conditions on the day were good. The Judges were Derrick Capel, Sheila Suzuki, Julia Sykes and Sharon Kitson, and the Chief Steward was Roz Bellamy.



The ground at Old Hemploe had been used previously for some walked-up training days and, whilst the ground was quite challenging the dogs had performed well and the game finding had been generally very good. However, more rain and warm conditions followed the training days and the planted areas of the field trial site had grown significantly. We quickly found that when the dogs were working more than 20-30 metres from their handlers they became very difficult to see, and therefore handle.

We started in the main area of cover crop with 4 dogs in line, two on each side, and two dogs in the centre in reserve but on leads. Andy Snow's team of guns were spread through the line, together with the judge's stewards and game carriers. The first few birds proved too good for the guns, but then started to fall at regular intervals.

There were some impressive retrieves but a number of eye-wipes as some dogs struggled in the thick cover crops, as did some people in the line! One dog was put out for poor heelwork, deciding it was easier to head along a wheeling than struggle through the crop with its handler. Another got into an area well ahead of the line and was led astray by a number of birds rising around it, and was called up. One bird appeared to have been shot and fell into a hedge and was held up. A judge went



forward to disturb it and it dropped to the ground, but when a dog was sent to the fall the bird quietly slipped away apparently unharmed.

Two birds fell into an area of hedgerow and ditch away from the line so there was no opportunity for them to be marked either by dogs or handlers. Two dogs were brought out of line and allowed to work the hedgerow and ditch, with both birds being successfully retrieved.

We moved on from the area of cover crop to some more open areas and

hedgerows but there were few birds. We then walked through another area of cover crop and a long strip of grass and some maize with the remaining three dogs handled by Andy Sweeney, Graham Clelland and Keith Manley, on one side of a hedge. A bird was shot well forward but could not be picked or found by the judges.

A pheasant was then shot across the hedge, falling about 25 yards forward of the line. The first dog was sent and retrieved an unseen partridge shot earlier, but when sent again for the pheasant was unable to get back to the fall. The same fate followed for the other 2 dogs and the judges declared the trial over with no result. They then went forward to find the bird but were unable to locate it; the bird was found later by the picking-up dog some 50 metres from the fall.



The judges opinion was that the ground would have been difficult for Open standard dogs and had therefore proved very challenging for Novice dogs. Some of the work had been very good with some dogs demonstrating good game finding in very difficult conditions.

With no awards, Keith Manley's dog Lenyam Solaway was awarded Gun's Choice and was awarded the Casurina Hip Flask.