

FLATCOATED RETRIEVER SOCIETY

(affiliated to the Kennel Club, Countryside Alliance, the National Gamekeepers' Organisation and BASC)

Monday, 30th January 2012

**Whatton House Shoot, Long Whatton,
Leicestershire LE12 5BG**

by kind permission of Lord Crawshaw,
Head Keeper, Mr Brian Twigger and
Mr David Bellamy's team of guns

As the season draws to a close the 156th Field Trial Meeting, Open Stake for 12 Flatcoated Retrievers was held at Whatton House Shoot in Leicestershire by kind permission of Lord Crawshaw. Many of you will know that this venue has hosted many Shooting Dog Certificate days and the Head Keeper Brian Twigger has always provided more than ample birds and a good rate of success. John Kahlow and Derrick Capel have judged the dogs on these SDC days. Whilst Brian has run a number of Trials, this is the first time the Flatcoated Retriever Society has visited Whatton House Shoot.

As Brian and Dawn are Flatcoat enthusiasts, the pressure was on to produce a good standard of dog work and to present some silverware for successful handlers and owners.

Jenny Bird, the Hon. Secretary of the FCRS and her husband Mike joined us for the day and took charge of a representative of the Press from The Field/Country Life magazine. Three photographers were in evidence.

The day started promptly at 9.30 am and competitors, Judges, Stewards, together with an ample gallery of spectators some from as far away as Sweden, proceeded to the first drive. My team of guns were rather apprehensive as Brian is renowned for producing high birds and he certainly did not disappoint. Our Judges, Mrs Gaynor Gent was positioned on the right, Mr Phil Wagland in the centre and Mr Graham Stanley on the left. With all dogs in line, the guns produced a number of cock birds which fell into long meadow grass. Unfortunately we lost four dogs. Caroline Hewison with Maddistream Indigo Jack of Casblaidd and Fred Newton's Jasper I'm No Angel succumbed to temptation and Dr Diane Heywood's Trioaks Mouse at Houndswood a veteran at eight years old unfortunately put a bird down on the return. Liz Widdows with Mahinda Artichoke struggled to find a bird and Andy Snow with the Necessaries Raffle was brought to the line by Phil Wagland and succeeded with an eye wipe. Kirsten Norberg a handler from Norway, with Mahinda Dexter produced another cock bird following a nice retrieve from the middle of the field.

The second drive of the day produced some very high birds from woodland and a cover crop at the top of a hill. The guns stood with their backs to woodland. Rob Willatts with Gowran Indigo Extra, Hilary Rosser with Mahinda Dudley, Helen Ford and Keveral Flybynite of Percuil, together with Chris Gwilliam handling Gowran Mars Black at Varingo joined the line. Birds came thick and fast from this drive dropping into the woodland behind us, but good dog work was seen. Unfortunately we lost Chris Gwilliam at this stage as his dog failed to hold the area.

For the third drive, Brian took us to a block of woodland and cover crop with guns and competitors standing in long meadow grass. Partridges and pheasants were produced which provide the guns with some testing targets together with a final flush of cock pheasants. One cock bird hit the ground just behind the line and set off at speed and

this produced too much of a temptation for Gowran Indigo Extra and Mahinda Dexter. A further casualty was Sarah Turley's Casblaidd Kaimi.

Richard Pettett's Brillen Dark Mystery was called in to join the remaining dogs, which had now dwindled to four. The Judges sent first Richard and then Andy Snow some distance across stubble for a cock bird which had run, but both failed and so did the Judges. Hilary Rosser was successful in a long retrieve on a cock bird which was close to the end of the line. Helen Ford was called up for a long retrieve on the right of the line, but was unsuccessful. Dick Pettett then was sent, but self-employment resulted in her picking a cock bird some distance away from the required bird.

Andy Snow was then called in and was successful in picking the nominated bird.

The Judges conferred and agreed that the two final competitors, Andy Snow and Hilary Rosser would sit another drive so they could compete against each other for the top spot. Having proved their steadiness during the Trial, the Judges placed the dogs at one end of the line. The drive produced a number of cock birds which fell behind the guns which made nominating a particular bird difficult. One bird had moved some distance making itself a nominated bird. Unfortunately the wind was such that both dogs could not collect the nominated bird first and we later learned from the senior Judge that this was the main reason why we were not awarded a first place at this Trial.

The Judges closed their books, the Trial finished and I took my guns on for a final drive before joining for the awards ceremony. At last we were able to award some silverware and Lord Crawshaw kindly joined us to present the trophies. Second place and the Creton Trophy, The Birch Challenge Cup for the highest placed retriever handled by its owner who must be an amateur, and the H. Hardy Memorial Trophy for best retriever on a runner all going to Mr Andy Snow and Dex. Third place was to Hilary Rosser and Dudley with the Hellingly Retriever Cup (Oliver Trophy) for best retriever handled by a lady and the Olaf Trophy for Guns Choice.

Lord Crawshaw, Brian Twigger, the Judges and the guns and helpers were all thanked in the usual manner. Again I would make special mention of Brian Twigger for organising a splendid day shooting for the guns, testing retrieves for the competitors and a pleasing day for the Judges. For my Stewards, Anne Sparkes my Chief Steward, Judges Stewards, Elaine Whittaker, Terry Sparkes and Malcolm Peacock. Again thanks to Hayley Tomlinson and others who walked in the line all day taking photographs.

Most of all I would thank the competitors who have supported this Open Field Trial and have travelled long distances around this country and from Norway. Finally my wife Roz who has given me enormous support dealing both with the paperwork and the catering whilst I have, perhaps slightly selfishly, enjoyed the shooting and the company of my fellow guns who fortunately, enjoy shooting at Field Trials!!

David Bellamy
Hon. Field Trial Secretary.