

The club held its first Novice Field Trial of the season, for 16 dogs at the Batsford Estate, near Moreton-in-Marsh, Gloucestershire, on Tuesday 15th November 2011, by kind permission of Lord and Lady Dulverton. The trial was judged by Mr John Jones, Mr Terry Dukes, Mr Mike Larkin and Mrs Lisa Harris. Steward of the Beat was Mr Matt Farmer, Chief Dog Steward was Miss Anna Yates, assisted by Ms Sara Bowie and Mrs. Claire Raymond. The day was organised by the club's Field Trial Secretary, Mr Roger Wiggins, and Assistant Field Trial Secretary, Miss Kelly Stringfellow.

Guns for the day were Pete Gardner, Dan Farmer, Roger Wiggins, Steve Prosser, Mike Weaver and Paul Evans. The club would like to express its grateful thanks to them and commend their excellent shooting throughout the day.

We met at the Batsford Estate offices, before moving on to the first drive. The day started cool, but was soon unseasonably warm, bright and sunny – in stark contrast to last year's deep freeze at the same venue! The weather did add to the overall enjoyment, with the gallery sitting on grassy banks to spectate in a quite summer-like fashion.

The first drive, "The Severells", was from woodland over a grassy bank. A substantial number of pheasant were shot enabling completion of first and second round retrieves for most competitors.

The second drive was "Worcester Approach", again from woodland over a grassy field, complicated by a slope that meant competitors could not see their dog working all of the time. As befits this stage of a trial, the distance of these retrieves was markedly greater than the initial rounds, as the judges sought to truly test the handlers and dogs. This drive enabled them to make their cut from the remaining competitors and take 6 dogs onto the final stages.

The third drive was "Rook Hill", from woodland again but this time with game falling onto a sloping field with the remnants of a wheat crop and maize cover, adjacent to a lake (not frozen over this year!).

The judges were made aware of a strong runner in bushes beside the lake. The first dog tried on this bird unfortunately failed despite showing good hunting ability. The determination and ultimate success of the next dog sent would have helped the judges in their decision to award the trial to him. This retrieve produced particular excitement in the gallery, who could see the cock bird popping in and out of the bushes in his efforts to evade the dogs in almost pantomime fashion!

The judges awarded first place to Mrs Pat Dixon with 3 year old Labrador dog Boddelwyddan Knight, second to Mr Tony Stanley with 4 year old Labrador dog Tuscaloosa Indian Runner, third to Mrs Killy Pennell with 2 year old Labrador dog Kilpen Laird and fourth to Mrs Mary Jarrod with 2 year old Golden Retriever dog Lilleburne Ripple Reed. Guns' choice was Tuscaloosa Indian Runner. Unfortunately our host was unable to present the awards this year but Matt Farmer did an excellent job in his place.

Matt also accepted a Christmas hamper for Lord and Lady Dulverton in thanks for their invitation to the club to run the trial on their estate.

Thanks to everyone involved in the day, The Batsford Estate, its gamekeeper Matt Farmer, the beaters, chief picker-up Doug Pitcher, those members of the gallery that stepped in to help carry birds and to all WVRC members helping to make the day work. Thanks in particular to Ruth Thomas for the catering – the lunch was very much appreciated by the guns, judges and helpers at the end of a long day!

