

The Wye Valley Retriever Club held their Annual Field Trial Training Day on Saturday 10<sup>th</sup> September, writes Julia Redpath.

We were there by kind permission of Mr. Martyn Cook at Alfrick in Worcestershire. We are most grateful to Mr. Cook for allowing us all to come onto his land, we all had a thoroughly enjoyable day.

Thank you Roger for putting up the club signs, good start to the morning and so was all the tea & coffee.

Our two A panel Judges were Mr. John Jones and Mr. Terry Dukes. This year it was decided to use cold game.



Before we got started I noticed a few very nervous faces, Roger Wiggins our Field Trial Secretary reminded everyone that this day was a 'training day' and that the Judges were here to help handlers and give advice and no one was to be put out. Once we got going everyone seemed to be encouraging one another and the nerves had subsided a little.

Frasier Hawkins and Bernard Pound were our guns for the day, they didn't miss a thing! In order to create a realistic atmosphere they used their guns with blanks.

Pam Mullins & Ruth Thomas were our Chief Dog Stewards who looked after the gallery. The reason for having two stewards is because the club are encouraging other members to learn this skill. You can never have enough volunteers. Julia Redpath & Rachel Birch were the Judge's Dog Stewards. Morton Redpath and Peter Boxall did a fantastic job of throwing with exceptional precision I must say.

It was a bright, warm and windy day and as we walked through the roots (in a straight(ish) line) the wind came from behind us. The rain held off and spirits were high.

We used Partridge on the first and second round. The first round retrieves consisted of a mark to a shot ahead in the roots, the second round retrieve was a mark to a shot on a cross retrieve.

For the third round we turned back up the field of roots to face the wind. The dogs had a mark to a shot and then a blind to a shot behind the line. Sonja Skinner put out the blinds and collected game. Without our volunteer helpers like Sonja giving up their time to come and help, the club could not have been able to run the day. We had thirteen volunteers and 16 dogs and handlers which proves hands down how much work goes into days like these for clubs.

For the third round Roger introduced rabbit along with the partridge which upped the game a bit!

Margaret Owers came and served tea & coffee & helped Kelly Stringfellow set out a lovely ploughman's lunch for everyone. Thanks Kelly, it was good to see everyone chatting about what they had done in the morning.

It became clear on the day that quite a few dogs and handlers needed further training in order to get their dog to stop on the whistle and handle. Some of the dogs were not on the whistle and some of the handlers could not get their dogs to hold an area. This was gracefully taken on board by some and in turn highlighted areas for improvement.

The purpose of the Field Trial Training Day was to help handlers and dogs. Handlers need to give themselves an honest appraisal as to whether they believe that they and their dog are ready and prepared for a Field Trial? Without the opportunity of running in days such as ours some of us may never know. Alternatively it may give some confidence to those who are more than capable but just needed some encouragement.

After lunch we set up a mini drive and each dog was sent for a retrieve. The temptation of swapping could have entered some dog's heads but none of them swapped. The last dog to go had to hunt and hold the area in order to find her retrieve which proved quite difficult, the dog worked well and succeeded. There was a lot of team spirit present.



The Judges then picked four of the best dogs for a run off which was a blind to a shot through the roots, over some cover and into a stubble field.

In fourth place was Angela Judge with Shuttifield Honour, in third place was Anna Yates with Cleirwy Pebble, in second place was Mary Jarrod with Lilleburne Ripple Reed and congratulations to Anna Jones with Bengalbrook Starbuck of Chemsell, seen here with our judges, Terry Dukes and John Jones.



Anna J also got a congratulatory hug from Roger Wiggins.....



Thank you once again to everyone who made the day the success that it was.