

BLACKPOOL – THAT OLD MAGIC

By LOLA MACDONALD DALY

There never was, and there never will be, a show like that of the combined Setter and Pointer Clubs at Olympia, Blackpool on November 20th 1946. I don't mean the dimensions. I don't mean the quality of the exhibits. But I do mean its atmosphere.

Compare those of you who were at both, the last championship show we knew – Harrigate of September 2nd 1939 (as World War 11 began) with this first championship show of our new era.

Then, if you remember, the black-out had come upon us for the first time the night before, and the lights of dogdom were going out as the figurative lights of bigger things were going out all over Europe. We talked in undertones; we thought of old So-and-So who had already decided to shoot all his dogs; we took our prize cards rather guiltily, because we had managed to get through while perhaps our strongest rival had gone off to join his regiment.

But Blackpool! It was as if everyone who ever owned a half-leg interest in a Setter or a Pointer had made up his mind to play a part in making this a renaissance which would be unforgettable.

The benches were in two long lines – and, as experiment after my first walk down them at 11 o'clock on the morning of the show, I timed how long it took to progress from one end to the other. It took 33 minutes.

Reason – the hundred-and-one handshakes and greetings from the hundred-and-one old friends not seen those seven years. Most of them astonishingly unchanged.

The reunion was tremendous. Its spirit such that the results almost became secondary. Any of us who feared that the acrimony of the sanction show (an acrimony that, I suppose, must always exist, where first prizes are cheap and bad dogs can win) might persist, since sanction shows were all that wartime had given us, and affect even the well remembered atmosphere of a big show, soon had those fears removed.

Yes, competition has never been regarded so avidly. When Tom Moorby, rubicund and check-suited still, came into his ring to judge the Pointers, there was a rush of old hands and new for vantage points until the crowd stood four-tiered above the huge arena.

As Stonethorpe Stunner progressed through his three heats to win the first post-war Pointer certificate, excitement grew.

I don't know whether it was the presence of so many Celts around the ring – and Stunner's owner Jim Davies, is a Welshman, remember! – but I have never known such emotionalism at a dog show.

There were few amongst us who were not affected by some form of emotion as the day wore on. For most, I think, it was nostalgic. It was rather like the verse the Scottish poet, Hugh MacDiarmid wrote the other day:-

There was a dachshund once so long,
He hadn't any notion
How long it took to notify
His tail of an emotion,
And so it happened, while his eyes
Were full of woe and sadness,
His little tail went wagging on
Because of previous gladness.

We knew we were not out of the wood yet. We knew that dogdom, resilient as it had proved, was going to suffer austerities and rigours for years to come. But a day like this was giving us flashbacks to the great moments of life.

Charlie Clarke, whom we expect to greet at a Gundog ringside on his hundredth birthday, was showing everybody his 20 year old snapshot of a curiously slim-looking Tom Moorby with Lune Prince. Dorothy Whitwell was speaking of Wanton of Weaverdown, the gay little English which was best bitch all breeds at Birmingham: with Marjorie Crowther we recalled Baronet, that champion whose presence in a catalogue used to send other exhibitors hearts plummeting to their boots. George Crawford, casting a lightning summing-up glance over one much-publicised entrant as it went past, said "Aye, a bit flat-sided, but so was old Champion So-and-So at the same age." Little Willie Rees, laughing over the days when we used to tell him that big Marlais Marksman was taking him into the ring instead of him taking Marksman. Arthur Eggleston made his old time quips from the side of his mouth to delighted ringsiders, while he kept his weather-eye on the judge's progress towards the dog he was handling.

So many other things, too, that were just the old days over again – Joe Braddon (Ide IS & P) arriving in the light of dawn, producing as many dogs from his car as a conjurer brings rabbits from a hat, greeting us with "Where do I get a shave!" Jay James (Wendover IS) saying "Yes sick all over me all the way" just as she used to say it of Wag – or was it Danson? Eileen Walker (Hartsbourne IS) announcing "Yes my glorious Sweetie, bless her" just in the same tone that she used to say "Yes, my glorious Vanity, bless her".

For the rest, the feature of the show was without doubt the success of the "new brigade" – exhibitors, many of whom were attending their first championship show. There was a tendency, I know from preliminary conversation, for wartime exhibitors to be suspicious as to the fairness of the crack of the whip they would receive when big time competition revived. Well, now everyone knows.....

Mrs. Miles, from Newbury, showed a Pointer bitch puppy in a way, she will forgive me for saying, gave evidence of her novice state. She won the puppy class and then, as much to her astonishment as delight, was awarded the reserve challenge certificate.

Mr. and Mrs. W. Foss (Valsett ES) wartime newcomers to English Setters, their experience confined to Midland radius shows, exhibited Rombalds Revel, a dog about which variety judges had shown notable divergence of opinion in their placings. Miss Dorothy Eyston not only awarded him the challenge certificate, but she made the same kennel's other exhibit reserve for the bitch championship

Mr. and Mrs. S. Wilson, unknown in Gordon exhibitors before the war, fared likewise – a certificate and a reserve certificate. Another Mr. Wilson, persuaded at a Dublin show by an old hand in Mr. Taylor to give his Gordon dog a crack at Blackpool won the green card that many a hardened breeder has spent a lifetime chasing.

And these are only a representative few, for discussion of the awards is not within the province of this article. But study of the prize list will show just in how many instances the newcomers were given the fillip that makes fanciers for life.

I had attended most of the other breed championship shows in London earlier in the year. All the other breed celebrities – and those who attended were legion – with whom I talked at Blackpool were unanimous in their agreement that none of the events had captured the old magic like this.

What was the secret? The long trip most of us made? The forced overnight stay and the consequent out weighting of the competitive instincts by the social? The presence of four breeds?

Partly, no doubt, all of these – and partly the organisation for which Mr. H.E.Roberts, who managed things for the Clubs as well, has had his reward, in the shape of the Kennel Club recognition of his right to revive his old event this summer.

But mainly, I feel the inspiration – it was nothing short of that – which caused Mrs. Ogden (Barrowdale IS) when the show was being planned to declare “We must not be run into any half-dress affair. When we hold our show it must be a REAL championship show – properly stage, properly housed, properly competitive – and with all the trimmings.” It was HER sufficient reward, I feel, that that was what we had...



**Best in Show 1946 Irish Setter Assoc of England RAYCROFT MEDIATOR
(Later Sh. Champ) owned by Rae Furness (nee Lamb) Judge : Mr A Ashworth**

THE WENDOVER SETTERS

Property of Mr. & Mrs. L. C. James, Furze Lodge, Boughton Green Road, Northampton
 Telephone : Northampton 285 . Station : Northampton, L.M.S.



BEORCHAM BRYONY OF WENDOVER



BEORCHAM BLASES OF WENDOVER

In 1939 this kennel housed five challenge Certificate winners in Irish Setters alone, namely Sugar, Ch. Steady Wag, Kerry and Danson . All have gone now (except Kerry who is still going strong in the ownership of Miss Kelly in Co.Kildare) but the evidence of their influence is still in the kennel despite the war years. Sugar's only daughter Drift was bought back in 1946, and from Drift we have Dinah and Sally and from Kelly there is a beautiful; bitch by Beau as yet unshown in Misty. Then in the dogs there is Beau, the son of Kerry (Irish Ch now) and Beau has produced many first class sons and daughters , some of these now winning well already. From Beau out of Wendover Bracken (a very beautiful bitch herself) and a daughter of Fleet of W) comes Riot, one of the best-headed Setters since the war. Riot has been out only once as a puppy, and has now gone to Mr.J.G Petherick of Glyncod note, for whom he will undoubtedly do a great deal of winning. The influence of Wag is apparent as the sire of Drift, but perhaps more so today as sire of Raycroft Mediator, the first dog to win three CC's after the war. The first Setter to win the most since the war was of course Beorcham Bryony of Wendover whose tally at the time of writing is five CCs at five shows and best of the Gundogs at Blackpool show (1947) Bryony is one of the great ones and must be considered the best Irish Setter in the breed at present. Her two litter brothers Blases and Blazenson are at stud at fees of 8 guineas, and are both dogs which will win their own reputations on the bench, and even more important will make a great name at stud. When this litter (their were

only the three in this litter bred by the Late Mrs. Foot) were bought last year from the executors of Mrs. Foot) the dam was also bought Beorcham Miss Bracken and she will occupy an important place in the breed as the dam of three famous Setters, but not less as the means of proving clear from the trouble of congenital blindness those three Setters and of course herself at the same time. Beorcham Miss Bracken has produced this year a litter of nine by an actively affected dog, and this litter was kindly checked over by Mr. Rasbridge and Mr. Braddon who agreed that the pups were quite normal in their sight. As Beorcham Blazon was a proved clear dog this automatically proves clear Blases Blazenson and Bryony. This is a vitally, important matter not only for the Wendovers, but for the breed. There is a very important litter in the kennel by Blases out of the test-mated and proven clear bitch Wendover Bracken which means a further three dogs and three bitches of the highest breeding which are clear of the factor of congenital blindness.

There are numerous other excellent Setters in the kennel in Irish and English apart from the Labrador and English Springer interest, but space does not permit detailed reference and the obvious important feature this year is the fact that the Wendover kennel is rapidly clearing its inmates of the dread trouble of congenital blindness and that these dogs and bitches are of the very highest quality. A blind bitch is in whelp to Beau which will then clear all the dogs in the kennel (if the mating is successful, of course and there is every reason to anticipate that it will be).



BEORCHAM BLAZENSON OF WENDOVER



WENDOVER BRACKEN

Photos. Thor. Fall

PRICE 2/6

CATALOGUE
OF
JOINT CHAMPIONSHIP SHOW
FOR
POINTERS and ENGLISH SETTERS

(Organised by Setter and Pointer Club)

GORDON SETTERS

(Organised by British Gordon Setter Club)

IRISH SETTERS

(Organised by Irish Setter Association, England)

TO BE HELD AT

OLYMPIA, WINTER GARDENS, BLACKPOOL

On WEDNESDAY, 20th NOVEMBER, 1946

Show opens at 11 a.m. Judging at 11.30 a.m.

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