

Meon Valley Working Spaniel Club

Open Cocker Trial - 18th November 2021

on the Southwick Estate by kind arrangement with Steve Veck
Steward of the Beat - Andy Pink

Judges Nick Gregory and Darren Skidmore

What a day it turned out to be... definitely one I will remember.

The lead up was pretty hectic for me. Not because lots of reserves had to be put in, they didn't, but I did have to find two Guns at the last minute - which is hard when everyone is either working or already shooting / running dogs. Then, the day before the Trial, the HQ Hotel phoned to say they couldn't do breakfasts for anyone other than their B&B guests. Oh well.. I'd buy loads of sausages and bacon and make breakfast butties. I had to cook all that in an unreliable Aga overnight.

It's been a little while since I've had to take all "the stuff" to a Trial, but the car filled up quite smoothly. I didn't forget anything - woo hoo!

There has been so much support for our Trials this year. Apart from CSJ, our long term sponsor of prizes, we have been given some lovely extra handmade gifts from Gamekeepers Goods. Chris Thurston had also donated lovely bottles. As ever, we had several offers of help on the day; from new members to Committee. Everyone was in good humour... it was just great to be having our Trials again.

The four Guns had come from all different directions - all keen spaniel men. A special mention to Jeff Roberts and Chris Thurston Woolnough for stepping in at the last minute. Paddy Williams and Andy Ling would have been pushed on their own LOL

Steve Veck, the Shoot owner, was as accommodating as ever. He even opened the gate earlier than the planned 0830 as several cars were congregating by 0800. Thanks for the call Janet :-D

Breakfast butties were handed out, announcements made, Guns and Judges briefed (no ground game and no Woodcock to be shot) and the cavalcade of cars was away... driving the extra few miles deeper into the Estate.

We pulled in the gates, parked up, put boots on, got dogs out and were soon lined out. The Keeper and Under Keeper met up with us there. It was a perfect day weather wise. Rather a lot of leaf remained on the trees and the cover was well up on last year. I was glad I hadn't volunteered to shoot - my little legs would have been worn out.

First two dogs were quickly in and cracking on. And on. And on. For a very long time. We were hunting the same woodland as last year but, compared to then, were not seeing any game at all.

By midday there had only been the odd pheasant and the Guns were told they could shoot Woodcock.

There had been several long but entirely blank runs. The Keeper, Andy, was very concerned. He knew we only needed thirty birds or so but this was getting ridiculous... so we changed grounds. I think the birds had put the word out. We were still seeing hardly anything. At 2.30 we finally came into a few pheasants lurking by a pen. There were still three or four dogs to be seen at each side.

I realise I have a reputation for not allowing any criticisms to be made of grounds, guns, judging etc. no matter what the circumstances. This day, I have to say, everyone was good humoured and I heard not a whisper, although I'm sure there were thoughts.

There were several times when the two judges were further apart than they would have liked. It made communication difficult. Andy was referring to us as Two Teams rather than just the right and left side of the same line.

Steve was clearly unhappy. He had tried everything. He had even allowed us to come into an area that he was saving for his next driven day. Unfortunately, the few birds that did make an appearance were running along the pen fence in front of us. Steve hadn't wanted to put any stops out at all, he felt that would have been unsafe. Indeed I felt he wasn't enjoying rough shooting, over spaniels, one little bit.

Finally, he could take no more. He shook my hand and said "I'm sorry, I can't do this. I am going to stop the day. It's now a quarter to, and I'm stopping this at 3 o'clock"

Thus, it was decided that, rather than just **stopping dead** and having to declare the Trial "null and void", the remaining dogs would, quite literally, be given the shortest of runs simply in order to finish the Trial. It was a sad end. You imagine if you had been lucky enough to have a good first run and then be given no opportunity to complete two?

It would not have been easy for the Judges to withhold first place. Linsey Whitley appeared to have had two good runs and her dog would, I'm sure, have made a worthy winner. Such is Trialling and what rotten luck for her.

Janet Righton was the only person to take away any silverware for the Best Hunting Dog - and also Guns Choice. I'll have the Salver back next year, please Janet, the Gamebag and dummies you can keep.

Despite the Trial being one of the HARDEST that I have ever attended, it was far from the worst. I really enjoyed the day. That sounds a little contradictory but then I am from Yorkshire.

We will be making alternative arrangements for our Open A/V

RESULTS

1st N/A

2nd JADENMOSS ASH OF MULLENSCOTTE Linsey Whitley

3rd CENTREWALK PAINTED LADY OF BRAEBEATE Buzz Kennard

4th HESTMOOR HASTE Geoff Shaw

Guns Choice &

Best Hunter Annual Salver CRAIWARN TINKERS STELLA OF COSTAPAKIT Janet Righton