

## Rushmore Farm - 26 October 2023

Today was our second Trial to be held here, by kind arrangement with Al and Michael Portman. Last year there had been a wobbly start to the shooting season as there'd been a sustained drought, hampering the growth of cover crops. No such problem in 2023 – my goodness – it had been rain, rain, rain.

However, this year had it's own problems. Prices were going up everywhere, everything from petrol to pheasant feed, people were tightening their money belts. Triallers were being slow submitting their entries and the Club wasn't even sure whether this, it's first Trial of the season, would even have enough dogs to go ahead (KC Rule dictates minimum 12).

We weren't the only Society having problems. Up and down the country it was the same story, particularly with Cockers.

Al and I were in constant touch. The Committee had daily emailed updates... As we approached the eleventh hour and a decision must be made... we had three new people that wanted to run their Cockers. They applied to join the Club and their entries were accepted. Wooo hooo - we had thirteen dogs running in the Trial; the KC minimum and a spare!

The day dawned bright and lovely. Al welcomed everyone with hot drinks and sausages/rolls. There was a barn full of happy faces!

Ian, the Keeper, didn't look quite so worried this year. Indeed, he had a big smile stretched from ear to ear every time I saw him. There were stops a plenty, all ready with their flags and fluorescents! Chris Green had, again, helped behind the scenes and organised local Guns who were deadly accurate, super safe and amazing fun to be out with. Oh – and I have to give a very special mention to some very young chaps, giving up days of their Half Term to come out and help. Their parents should be extremely proud.

Andy Robinson had travelled the furthest to be our senior Judge. Glynn Smith came up from Wiltshire. Both experienced and practical cocker men (*you can get treatment these days – private joke – sorry*). Having Judges with their level of expertise is a must for all Trials, it's a privilege.

We were driven to the start point in Bob Cooke's beater's cart. Big up to Fosbury. I haven't seen Bob for years. It's not until you get to the top of the hills that you realise just how high some of the ground is around here. Hiking is good for the heart. Check out the photographs.

The Trial got off to a flying start, dogs went well all day. To be honest, I didn't see enough of the individual runs to be able to make any comment myself. It's many years since you could watch old Erlandson skulking about (*he did that very well*) in the middle of a line, with his notepad and pencil. One person I did feel for today was Lee Cooper. That flipping runner!! If only!! If Lee hasn't done it already, he'll soon win with that dog.

Every competitor had a great day. Not all made it through the Trial totally unscathed, but we were done and dusted, in the sun, by 1.00 and still smiling over cake and coffee at the end.

Awards and prizes were given - Sponsors today were ***Gamekeepers Goods***

Thank you to EVERYONE for making today so enjoyable, after it nearly didn't happen at all..