

Working Achievements and The Modern Revival

Achievements

Outstanding dogs between the wars included Bacchus who went from the Club breed stake to win an Open AV and Diploma of Merit in the Spaniel Championships. Another D.M. went to Tess of Shill in the '25 Championships. In 1931 Mr R.H.Sprake's Legacy Lex won Puppy and Open in the breed stake, going on to win the Eastern Counties SC AV Open. This dog, bred by Lt-Col & Mrs Horsfield, was the only other Welshman to win an AV Open stake in the pre-war era.

After the 39-45 war three kennels, Hal Leopard's Rushbrooke, Mr H C Payne's Tregwilym, and Mrs Dorothy Morriss's Stokecourt, led the way in competitive working achievements during the next decade and a half. Leopard's Ch. Rushbrooke Runner won the 1948 Novice and Open breed stakes. R. Racer, bought in from a Sussex keeper, won the Club Open from '49-'52, and a Certificate in an AV Open.

Cliff Payne, trialled into the Sixties, often with his friend John Forbes, who also competed with his own Welsh, like Glennewton Lucky, before moving from Abergavenny to Norfolk. Batch, Mastershot, Dawn and Flush of Tregwilym were all breed trial award winners: the latter also was placed twice in AV stakes, in '61 and '62. His Tregwilym kennels became for many years the largest and best general collection in the world.

Dorothy Morriss, whose first Welsh, Stokecourt Beau was purchased as a Cocker, patronised several trainers, including John Forbes and John Kent, in the next decade, though often handled her dogs herself, and several good workers, such as Cdr. Clarke's S.Simon, and her S. Satan and S.Susan in her dual-purpose kennel. The last high achiever, in the early '60s was Stokecourt Sam, who, handled by Jim Wylie, gained a record 12 Certificates, 2 Seconds and a First in AV Novice stakes, and a Third in an AV Open stake. Jim on a later occasion told me that he came so close to victory and could easily have won, with a bit more style.

Modern Revival

The revival of serious breed club-organised training in the 70's led by Working Secretary Angela Lewis (Riscoris) and Working Chairman Gordon Pattinson (Tidemarsh) produced many more field trial successes. The Spaniel Club's revived 'Minor Spaniels' stake, from '76 to '82, saw WSS domination against mainly Irish Water Spaniel competition, with three wins apiece for Mrs Lewis, with R. Georgina, Georgette and Flash In The Pan, and Ray Plunkett, with R.Delight Of Clankerry and C. Forever Amber. Altogether, in this phase, the breed, with the Mullins's Athelwood Uncle Sam, Lorraine Holdaway's Clankerry Clydwen, and Pattinson's Clankerry Cariad of Tidemarsh, won 6 Firsts, 2 Seconds, 1 Third, and 7 Certificates of Merit in 'Minor Spaniel' trials. Against English Springers, too, Ray and Angie were successful in gaining certificates in AV Novice stakes.

In 1983 the WSSC began a new sequence of field trials, with a simple single annual stake for the breed. Eileen Falconer's Hackwood Kingfisher won in '83 and '84 and Ray, placed in '83 and '85, bowed out in '86 with First and Second places. The three outstanding handlers in the breed since then have been John Derrick from Newbridge, Gwent, with Sadie Red Flash, Surefoot Samson, Mynyddmaen Bronymaen,

M. Bach Craig, M.Catryn and M.Tegwyn; Gill Tully from Maldon, Essex, with Highclare Special Formula, H. Strands Of Gold and H.Style Trial, and Julie Revill, also from Maldon, with Julita Rainspeckle, J.Roxanne and J.Ruella. Many other amateur competitors gained FT Awards and Certificates too, including David Rowlands' Caegwaith Bull, Joan Brennan's Caegwaith Pal, Peter Royston's Cleygate Adventurer, John Warren's Highwinder Betcina, Ann Jones's Golden Penny, Tony Nuccoll's Annabella of Litelion, Christine and Andrew McDonald's Ch Northey Whittington, Anne Morgan's Amiro Apache Lone Walker, Derek and Pat Dean's Northey Sonnet and Ch N.Showboat, Steve Lang's Golden Flash, and Pauline and John Phillips's Topmast Captain and T.Carnation.

The records show, then, that there is a respectable record of achievement in serious competitions. The decade up to 1995 was more fruitful in terms of the total numbers of participating dogs, and of trial awards and certificate successes, than ever before in breed history. Test successes have not been explored here for simple reasons of space, but in 'Minor Spaniel' contests and the annual Show Spaniels Field Day Welshies have consistently proved their ability against all spaniel breeds resembling their breed standard. I was delighted to read Graham Cox state in *The Field* that these breeds are serious contenders, when judged as breeds with a different style, in his review of the Minor Spaniels stake at Sandringham in 1993.

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