

MIDLAND COUNTIES LABRADOR RETRIEVER CLUB OPEN COLD GAME WORKING TEST 23RD JULY 2017

Jim Christon and I were given the job of judging this competition held at Ermine Street Farm, Ancaster in Lincolnshire on a sunny but slightly blustery day.

Unfortunately due to the team events at Holkham Fair, Norfolk the attendance at this event was on the low side, however we had a total of 17 runners after three withdrawals and two no-shows.

It was decided on the day by those organising the event that it would be a static test with only the minimum of walking-up in the massive field of sugar beet that was provided by the hosts C J Farms Ltd. Two tests had been arranged for us with Jim taking his dogs up the side of the beet next to a hedge where two retrieves were requested of the handlers, namely a mark into the beet and a blind into the cover on the edge. Apparently this caused some problems due to the wind coming over the hedge leaving a dead area where scent was poor. I gather from Jim that some of the dogs struggled with this test.

I was given a small two-dog walk-up where two birds were thrown at the same time to shot into the beet, which was then repeated with the opposite dog going first on the second retrieve which was again two birds thrown together but in the opposite direction . It was a shame that we were so close to the other exercise as it was sometimes difficult to decide who was blowing their whistle, my competitors or Jim's. In hindsight we should have been allowed to move a lot further down the field! However my competitors coped with this admirably in spite of the interference.

In view of the appalling weather forecast for the afternoon it was decided that we should break for lunch at this point even though we had finished the first two exercises early, so that we could continue with the drive over the hedge and finish in good time.

Jim took the dogs out into the stubble and lined them up in two lots facing the hedge where shots were fired and birds thrown from behind the hedge into the beet. My job was to check the dogs' hunting ability out of sight of the handler and ensure that none of them changed birds. This was completed successfully.

At this point we decided to make a cut and took the top 7 dogs through for a very long blind over the stubble which must have been well over 200 yards with a cross wind. With three exceptions these dogs completed this exercise with speed and style and we were able to make our awards with very little deliberation, well before the weather deteriorated.

- 1st Braidenvale Ribble owned and handled by Linda Partridge
- 2nd Verrad Direfly owned and handled by S M Wilson
- 3rd Braidenvale Lochan owned and handled by Linda Partridge
- CofM Diglake Charlie owned and handled by Stephen Newitt
- CofM Flashmount Gallit owned and handled by Derrick Capel

All thanks must go to Paula Gravett and Paul Sykes for organising this event and to Joan Hayes for stepping in once again at the end when Paula had to leave early due to work commitments. It is always a shame when so few people offer to help at these events and one sees the same few helping time and time again. We could not run these events without the dummy throwers, shot firers and refreshment providers who give up their time selflessly to help out so that others can enjoy. Having been working test secretary and field trial secretary more than once I know how very time consuming these jobs are and how difficult it is to get help, so please give this matter some thought as it can be very rewarding.