



This Summer the English Setter Club held a Demonstration Day on a grouse moor in the North of England, the aim of the day was to enable English Setter Enthusiasts to be able to see at close quarters how the dogs work.

The English Setter is one of five breeds of dogs in the Pointer and Setter Sub group, the others being the English Pointer, the Gordon Setter, the Irish Setter and the Irish Red and White Setter.

These dogs are used primarily as locating dogs in the UK, They quarter the ground into the wind, using air scent to locate their quarry and once scent of the quarry is found they freeze on point until the handler gets to the them; they will then rode in on command to flush the birds. Once the birds flush the dog drops until asked to move on again to clear ground.



In the UK the primary work this sub group does is for shooting, falconry, counting - in particular Grouse counting so estates have an idea of what breeding stock they have in the Spring and then what density of game there is in the summer so they can plan their shooting days, they are also used for research work by conservation organisations such as GWCT. In addition, enthusiasts work these dogs in Field Trial competitions, the aim of the competitions being to find the dog which would be the best dog to shoot over on the day. Each of the breeds in the sub-group does the same job but all do it in a slightly different way and have different styles of work.



As Colin Organ, one of the experts helping on the day pointed out, the English Setter is the oldest of the Pointer and Setter breeds, developed before the advent of shotguns to locate the game birds so that they could be netted; even today a trait in some of the English Setter bloodlines is for the dog to move from side to side when working out a point, in the past this would have enabled the net to be thrown over the birds more easily.

Our day began on the morning of 20th July when a very jolly band of about 20 people met on the moor in sunshine, under clear skies and refreshed by a steady breeze - perfect conditions for two legged and four legged friends.

The enthusiasts came from various backgrounds some with Show dogs, some new to Working English Setters and some without a Setter at all, but who wanted to find out more about the breed.



We all gathered together for coffee and biscuits and introductions; Mr Dom Goutorbe, The English Setter Club President introduced Mr William Town the shoot Captain of our very generous hosts , the Keeper Mr Charles Woods and the team of experts who had kindly volunteered to come and help .

Mr Town gave a short talk about the moor, the habitat and the red grouse; the game bird the English Setters would be hunting for on the day. We then all donned our walking boots, sun hats sun cream and set off at a brisk pace up the hill.

Dom began the day working his four year old English Setter bitch Fly into the wind, she cast off flat and wide out to the right at full gallop; turned to come back down in front of us all and then flashed onto point in the middle of the beat in full view of the gallery. Dom took two of the participants with him and they worked the point out- it was a perfect production Fly roding in freely and producing a well grown covey of eight grouse.



Even for those of us who work these dogs regularly, it is magic and mesmerising to watch them and it is hard to explain the feeling one gets when these dogs galloping at full speed suddenly freeze as the scent hits their nose and their whole being is suddenly rigid with anticipation, concentrated on finding their quarry. One cannot help but be thrilled, excited, uplifted and full of admiration for these free spirited dogs who are happy to share all their natural instincts to please us.



Next to work a dog was Ann Maddison with her English Setter bitch Daisy and another two spectators were able to walk next to the handler whilst the dog was being worked and so the day progressed, with different English Setters being worked and everyone getting a chance to get up close. The Setters had to cover large areas of the moorland and did this at speed showing what courage and stamina they have to have.

We stopped for a very civilised lunch, picnicking in the sunshine, admiring the spectacular scenery and then set off again onto a lower part of the moor. The dogs shown were not all finished dogs and we saw a puppy out learning his trade and also saw that it takes a lot of time and patience to get to the standard of the experienced dogs, my own dog being a good example that they don't always do as they are asked even when, or especially when they have an audience!!!



All the experts were only too happy to answer any questions and were delighted that they had so many genuinely interested people to talk to.

The day finished as it had started, in sunshine and we all sat having a cool drink asking and answering questions about the breed, the moor and the grouse, a tired but happy group of people with a common interest- the English Setter.

The Breed and the English Setter Club are both full of history and tradition, the English Setter Club being the oldest Gun Dog Club in country, preceding the Kennel Club it was founded in 1890 at the Curzon Hall in Birmingham and the Club is lucky enough to still have all the original minute books including the minutes taken at that very first meeting at which it was decided that “ *a Club be formed forthwith to be called the English Setter Club, whose objects would be the improvement of The English Setter not only in regard to perfection in form but in respect to practical use in the field*”

It was a real privilege and honour for the Club that so many people wanted to come and see English Setters doing what they were bred for and although I am biased, I would recommend any gundog lover to try and watch Pointers and Setters at work at some point in their lives, as putting pen to paper cannot do them justice.

For further information please contact Fiona Kirk Hon Sec, English Setter Club