

Up until the late 17th century, birds were traditionally shot whilst on the ground or perched, as well as being netted and hunted with hawks. With the improvement in shotgun technology in the early 18th century, birds began to be shot in flight with the sport becoming known as 'shooting flying'. The 'guns' would follow behind dogs trained to find and 'hold' game until the 'guns' were in range when the dogs would flush the birds on command.

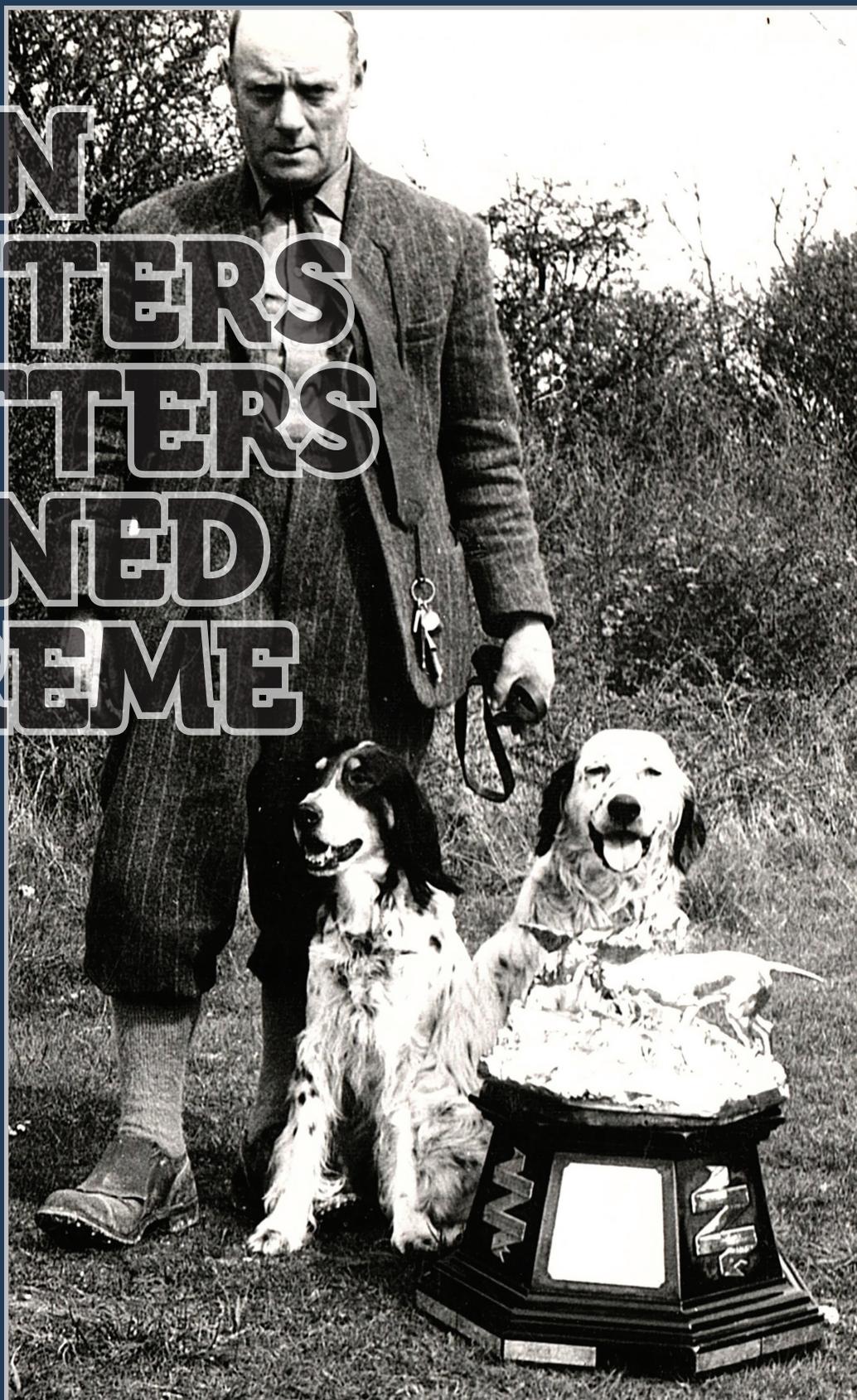
WHEN POINTERS & SETTERS REIGNED SUPREME

BY NICK WATERS

With the introduction of the double barreled breech loading gun in the mid-19th century the art of driven shooting emerged. Instead of walking towards the birds in a fairly random way, these shoots were more formally organised with the 'guns' standing at a fixed position or 'peg', whilst the birds were driven towards and over them.

Up until this time, when Spaniels and later Retrievers came into their own, Pointers and Setters reigned supreme in the shooting field. This feature focuses on three of the most important models of the 19th century to show the two breeds working together.

The earliest is a bronze group by Pierre-Jules Mêne (1810-1871), the most successful and prolific animalier of his day. He exhibited his work extensively including the London Exhibitions of 1855 and 1861. Mêne gave his animals a character and natural appeal of their own, capturing in bronze a moment in the subject's life.



The dogs in this group are 'Sylphie' the Setter and 'Tac' the Pointer and are shown on a naturalistic base, the Setter 'backing' the Pointer on point at a partridge in the undergrowth. It was exhibited in wax at the 1848 Salon and again in bronze two years later. It is one of Mêne's best known dog groups and a very popular one that was made in several large editions.

The magnificent silver centrepiece some 18 ins. long and weighing 147 oz. is hallmarked for Elkington and Co. Birmingham 1861. It is mounted on an oval wooden base with bun feet. As with the Mêne group, the Setter is 'backing' the Pointer on point at a bird in the undergrowth. By the 1860s Elkington had become one of the world's leading makers of silverware. The firm received notable commissions and their silverware was seen at a variety of places; in the first class room on the ill-fated Titanic to Wimbledon and the ladies single trophy. The centrepiece is with A. Pash & Son, London with a price tag of £32,000.

With hindsight its appearance was timely. Two years after what is regarded as the first dog show along the lines of those we know today, one for Pointers and Setters held at Newcastle-upon-Tyne in June 1859 (although there are claims that one for Fox Terriers was held at Cleveland in 1857), and the first field trial, also for Pointers and Setters, run on the estate of brewer Samuel Whitbread M.P. in Bedfordshire in 1865.

The Newcastle show, held in conjunction with the town's poultry show, was promoted by Messrs. Shorthose and Pape as much to promote their sporting shotguns as it was to promote the dogs. Mr. Pape gave what was described as "two valuable guns", one each for the best of each breed. There were 23 entries for Pointers and 37 for Setters. The Best Pointer was owned by J. Brailsford and the Best Setter, a Black and Tan (Gordon), by William Jobling. 'The Newcastle Courant' of the 1st July reported that "the new feature of the addition of Sporting Dogs to the show of Poultry was a great attraction, and tended in no slight degree to the success of the meeting."

There were three judges for each breed, Dr. John Henry Walsh, editor of 'The Field', being the only one to judge both breeds. Brailsford, who took the award for Best Pointer, went on to promote the second dog show, a much more ambitious affair catering for a number of breeds. This was held in Birmingham in November 1859 and the forerunner of what is today 'The National Dog Show'.

Dr. Walsh played an important part in setting up the first



field trial. Nine Pointers and seven Setters, all Black and Tan, ran with the two judges on horseback following the dogs. A brief notice in 'The Field' reported that the conditions were not ideal, there was insufficient cover and the air was hot and still. Not everyone was impressed with the trial, either in principle or practice and 'The Field' published many letters of complaint, but field trials were now established.

The impressive silver trophy mounted on an ebonised base with engraved silver plaques attached is the oldest and possibly the most beautiful of all the trophies owned by The English Setter Club, the oldest gundog club running field trials. Hallmarked for 1896, it was made by the Goldsmiths and Silversmiths Company, Regent Street, London and stands some 18½ ins. high. Called 'The Pure Type Challenge Trophy for Braces', it was offered first in 1896 at the autumn trials of the International Pointer and Setter Society and was won by Sir W.W. Wynn's Pointers, Rob O'Cymru and Ben O'Cymru. It was won outright by B.J. Warwick who presented it to The English Setter Club.

The last time the trophy was awarded was in 1975 when it was won by the Executors of the Late Lord Rank's Pointers F.T.Ch. Scotney Flash and Scotney Isle of Arran Regent. The last Brace Stake was run by The English Setter Club in 1978, but there were no awards. With the demise of the big kennels with trainers, handlers, volume of dogs and time and ground to train, brace stakes will probably never be run again, at least for the foreseeable future.

Since 1988 the trophy has been on loan to The Kennel Club (who kindly supplied the image) with the Loan Agreement being renewed every five years.

The photograph of Tom Spark who handled Captain W. Parlour's English Setters F.T.Ch. Sharnberry Freda and F.T.Ch. Sharnberry Kandy to win the Trophy in 1966 is included to give an impression of the trophy's size.

This group, like the two previous groups, shows a Setter 'backing' a Pointer on a naturalistic base. It was sculpted by Richard Hewitt Moore (op.c.1868-1910) who contributed illustrations to many journals and illustrated numerous books, C.H. Lane's 'All About Dogs' being the most complete source for his work. Now almost exclusively thought of as a pen and ink illustrator, Moore also worked in oils and watercolour and was a sculptor of exceptionally great talent.

Making comparisons between the three groups one can't help thinking the sculptor of the Pash group and R.H. Moore were both influenced by the popular Mêne group.