Haworth Moor Grouse Pointing Test
27th July 2019
Judges: Ms Penny Pickstone and Mr Steve Pleasance
by kind permission of Mr John Standevan and the Haworth Moor Syndicate.

Weather conditions:
Dry morning and very wet in the afternoon

Scenting conditions:
OK but very short

Type of ground, quantity and species of game:
Undulating open moorland with sufficient grouse and an odd pheasant.

General standard of work and handling:
Some promising dogs hampered by over handling

Judges Critique of Graded Dogs
FT Ch Stubblemere Cawdor. GSP (B). Adult – Handled by M Canham
A very experienced dog showing what it can do. Hunted a steady pace, covering its ground well. Located grouse on the edge of tall heather. Held the birds until the handler was close, then moved on command to flush a brace. Was steady throughout. Ran on to locate a single bird from the same covey, which it again flushed in full control. **Graded Very Good.**

Stubblemere Tystie. GSP (B). Junior — Handled by M Canham
A positive hunting dog ran a cheek to head wind. Pattern was a little off so missed pockets of ground. Had no birds on first run. Had a second run, this time it hunted wide and located and pointed a nice covey. Flushed with handler and was steady throughout. Nice piece of work for a young dog. **Graded Good.**

Stubblemere Abbess. GSP (B). Adult — Handled by C Kenney
Started a little erratic with a large back cast. But settled into a pattern moving steadily. Located an area where a covey had just moved from. Got a little bogged down on residual scent. Cleared the area then moved on with pace to re-establish contact with moving birds. Eventually located the covey, a stylish point and flush on command with good steadiness. **Graded Good.**

Sanjon Brier. GSP (B). Adult — Handled by J Herbert
This fast dog was soon into its beat and located, pointed and flushed a covey, and was steady throughout. It was then cast out on the other side of its beat where it ran very wide with little interruption from the handler. No further birds were located. **Graded Good**

Deepthatch Rocket. GSP (D). Adult — Handled by R Webster
Strong dog, that moved through the heather well, covering the undulating ground well. Located a brace unsighted from us, lifted one bird. Was steady, then flushed the second on command. Moved across its beat and located another brace which it pointed and flushed. It then indicated on an area where a bird had just lifted out of sight of the dog. **Graded Good.**

Our thanks for the success and enjoyment of this trial are due to all those who helped to organise it and in particular to John Standevan and The Haworth Moor Syndicate, Paul Thurtle the 'keeper, Janice Hawkes the FT Sec for running the day so efficiently and to my co judge Penny Pickstone.

Steve pleasance

This is an additional comment on the day, following on from my co-judge's report.
These matters would normally have been covered at the end of the test, but as the weather was unkind (rain like stair-rods) we were all extremely wet, and cold through to the bone, so the post-test discussions were cut short.

Haworth is a good HPR moor — that is to say, it's difficult, therefore, the dogs need to hunt effectively, the birds are wary and wily, and don't come readily. It can only be worked in one direction, to the right the ground slopes away, so in very wet conditions as these were, the majority of the birds would have been in longer heather and sheltering under the slope. Furthermore, grouse will crouch in the heather, leaving no indication of their presence, so are easily missed. Generally, a lot of the information the dogs receive tends to be from where the broods have been; dogs will therefore work out these scent areas and then establish where the broods have got to. This is not a process which benefits from handler intervention, other than ensuring the dogs don't get bogged down in scent (by moving on not by resorting to whistle and voice).

To compound the difficulty on this day, the wind was a right hand cheek, blowing up the slope, and clearly pulling the dogs in that direction. From the available evidence, when the dogs got within say, 50 yards, the scent dropped in to the heather and was lost, except to those dogs who lowered their heads and read the ground.

For the handlers, this was a conundrum — and various approaches seemed to be: follow the dog and miss ground? Slow down and let the dog work out what was going on? Tell the dog where to go? Restrict the dog's outrun and focus purely on getting a point (no point, no grade, being the mantra)? Ignore everything other than letting the dogs work into wind (that's into, not across it)?

We estimated that overall just under half the available ground was not touched, because handlers, with some exceptions, just followed the dog, and didn't ensure that the dog was given the opportunity to work the wind and ground effectively. The most productive work on the day was by dogs sorting things out with their handlers trusting them to get it right and simply making sure they covered their ground.

There is an increasing tendency in HPR work to limit the beat these dogs take. This is not a good practice. The beat and its extent is determined by the ground. Let them work, handlers, and you focus instead on ensuring that the work they do is sound and productive. They're not spaniels, and they're not labs.

Here endeth the lesson.

P. Pickstone