

This article was written in 2007 for DOG WORLD by Mrs. Wendy Andrews

## DUAL PURPOSE GOLDENS

### THE RECEEDING DREAM.

A Canadian Dual Champion FC-AFC Firemark's Push Comes to Shove has recently achieved his title – the first Golden Retriever in North America for at least 35 years! Exciting news indeed! Sadly, I fear that to equal that in this country, is now little more than a pipe dream.

Why the Great Divide? The worlds of work and show have become progressively more specialised. Fewer people have the resources, energy and, most especially, time to pursue careers in both spheres with the same dog. The last Dual Champion, over 50 years ago was Miss Lucy Ross' International Champion David of Westley. More recently Jim McKenna's Ch. Jescott Galahad had Open Stake awards as had Derek Price Harding's Ch Deremar Rosemary.

The most significant challenge in the last 25 years was mounted by Daphne Phillpot with her home bred bitch Ch Standerwick Thomasina. Sired by F.T. Ch Holway Spinner x Strathcarron Seil of Standerwick in 1979, she won awards in A.V. Open Stakes and took her bench title in 1984. Her breeding goes back on Holway, Westhyde and Stubblesdown lines, so her ancestry was largely bred for working but 'Tommy' also had the conformation and good looks to gain her bench title. She was lucky to have an owner/handler who recognised her qualities and was capable of taking her to the top in both spheres. It seems so unfortunate that she was dogged by the 'bad luck' that field trials are notorious for and narrowly missed out on making a piece of history.



### Ch Standerwick Thomasina

More recently, Ch Ninell Harrington at Millgreen, on the other hand, was bred from stock that had been largely successful in the show ring, albeit with a line spanning five generations of male descendants with Field Trial Awards. Bred by Viv Jones in 1996 (Catcombe Cheshire at Millgreen x Ninell Georgia) Harry was campaigned to his title by Sue Barnes, while her husband Dave trained and handled him to success with two field trial awards in novice, breed stakes. Harry was the winner of the GRC's 'The Anningsley Perpetual Challenge Cup' in 2000 which had not been awarded since

1991 and has not been awarded since. He is currently the only living Champion Golden resident in the UK that has Field Trial awards.



**Ch Ninell Harrington at Millgreen**

Sadly there are pitifully few kennels today that actively compete in both spheres with the same dog, although there are a few split kennels that do so with dogs of specialised breeding, with separate show and working bred lines - mine included. Why not breed the two together to get the best of both worlds? I can assure you this has been tried many times and has sadly always resulted in mediocrity with offspring not good enough to make it to the top in either sphere. One problem is the difference needed in the physique of the dog for the two disciplines.

Increasingly exacting standards are demanded at trials today. Speed, pace and style are essential to catch the judges eye and so physically an athletic, agile frame without undue substance or heavy bone is required. To leap over a five barred gate with a bird is all par for the course. Golden Retrievers, to gain their title, have to compete in A.V Open Stakes – against the leaner working Labrador. On the other hand, the show scene is equally demanding with large numbers entered in the classes and tough competition at the top. Today's fashion requires a heavier dog all through, with plenty of substance. It is interesting that one gets little help for correctness from the K.C.Breed Standard on this matter, as in the 1990's the clause stating the ideal weight was removed, leaving only the ideal height for guidance. What folly!

After a 50 year gap since Dual Ch David of Westly made his mark I feel there is little possibility now of claiming another U.K. Dual Champion. Short of a miracle the great divide is now too wide to breach. The dream of doing so has receded.

Some might ask, although lamentable, does it really matter? The future of field sports, and shooting in particular, is under grave threat and we might well be forced into a situation where the need for a retriever of game disappears. Would it matter if the natural working ability, originally so carefully bred for, was eroded even more?

The Golden Retriever was developed to retrieve dead and wounded game in the shooting field, where a soft mouth – the ability to carry game tenderly so as not to render it unfit for the table – was essential. Also necessary was the ability to accept training and the will to please (biddability) To work with and for man. The qualities that help make the Golden an outstanding gun dog and retriever are the same qualities that fit him for the wide variety of pursuits in which Goldens have excelled –

companions and a family friend, work with the disabled, guide dogs for the blind, sniffer dogs, hearing dogs, and participation in agility, obedience, tracking, working trials, field trials and dog shows. These qualities have contributed even more than outward appearance to the Golden's tremendous growth in popularity. Temperament and working ability are primary features of the breed. Without them, we have just an ordinary dog.

Mrs M.K. Wentworth-Smith (of Yelme) wrote in the 1957 Golden Retriever Club of Scotland Handbook an article discussing dual purpose Goldens. I feel it is apt to quote it at this stage, as I echo her sentiments. *“--- I would ask two things of Golden Retriever breeders and owners – to seriously study the breeds “Standard of excellence” and work to it; and to remember that the Golden they own is a working dog and should be given the chance to use his inherited instincts for seeking and retrieving, no matter in how simple a form. Give him the chance to develop and use his latent working qualities to hand on to the future generations.”*

Maybe we will never have another Dual Champion but for the future of our Breed, we must endeavour – all of us that is, and not just the committed few- to maintain, by breeding and some basic training- the intelligence, natural ability and biddability of our dogs.

Training for any discipline can be fun. There are many clubs and groups available throughout the country to get you going. Gun dog work, in particular, has a network of training classes held regularly throughout the summer which are readily available through the branch areas of the URC, local Breed Clubs and the many Field Trial and Working Gundog Societies. Contact details are easy to find from the internet or the Kennel Club or by word of mouth. Start with some basics and progress from there. You as well as your dog will love it! There is no mystique about training dogs - Take heart from the quote by James Lamb Free, one of America's most famous gundog trainers, taken from Michael Twist's book 'The complete Guide to the Golden Retriever.'

*“No matter what you have heard or read to the contrary, there isn't so much to training a good retriever. There's nothing to it that a fairly bright moron couldn't figure out for himself.”*

Wendy Andrews