

# DOING BETTIE PROUD

Widely regarded as the doyenne of working English setters in the UK, Bettie Town was quite a remarkable lady, says Jon Kean who reflects on a special one-off field trial held at the Glenprosen Estate in her memory.

PHOTOGRAPHY: GLYN SATTERLEY



There can be no finer sight than pointers and setters working on a grouse moor. I say this because I have just witnessed a truly outstanding sporting event at the magnificent Glenprosen Estate in the Angus Glens in Scotland, by kind invitation of Mr Robin Batchelor.

It was organised by the English Setter Club in memory of the club's late president Mrs Bettie Town – the doyenne of working English setters in the UK. In essence, it was a wonderful tribute to a remarkable lady. She loved the countryside and could turn her hand to most fieldsports.

At the age of 19, Bettie was introduced to the world of pointers and setters when she went to work for Captain William Parlour, the owner of the famous Sharnberry English setters. It was here she also learnt to be a proficient Shot. The first award she won at a field trial was in 1949 at Bolfracks Estate in Perthshire, with a pointer called Eilian Boss.

The first English setter she handled was the Field Trial Champion (FTCh) Sharnberry Whitestone. Bettie always said later that she had been “spoilt” by him, as he was one of those once-in-a-lifetime dogs, winning more awards than any other English setter in Britain, including the English Setter Challenge Trophy in six consecutive years (1951–56). Bettie won this trophy for the last time in 2002. She also won the Kennel Club Pointer and Setter Champion Stake three times with English setters: FTCh Sharnberry Red Bracken in 1970; FTCh Little Dodi of Sharnberry in 1973; and FTCh Sharnberry Dougal in 1978. Indeed, she won many other field trials and made up numerous other Field Trial Champions. A member of the Kennel Club from 1974, she was the first woman to be elected from the club to its Field Trials Sub Committee, on which she remained for 20 years.

“Mrs Town became president of the English Setter Club in 1980, a position she held with great pride until her death in 2013.”



The current president of the English Setter Club and event organiser, Dom Goutorbe

The Sharnberry setters became famous in the world of pointer and setter field trials but they were primarily shooting dogs and were shot over every August 12 on Summerlodge Moor in Swaledale, and throughout the grouse shooting season for as long as the weather was favourable on Summerlodge and on the Nookton and Newbiggin Estate in Co Durham.

Mrs Town became president of the English Setter Club in 1980, a position she held with great pride until her death in 2013. She was also president of the Yorkshire Gundog Club, vice-president of the International Gundog League Pointer and Setter Society and was also secretary of this club.

On this day, The English Setter Club invited The Pointer Club, The Gordon Setter Field Trial Society and the Irish Setter Association to each select a team of six dogs from their respective breeds to compete in a special one off field trial. In pointer and setter field trials, the dogs are tested to replicate a shooting day.



Judges on the day were Fiona Kirk (Bettie's daughter) & Colin Organ

## POINTERS AND SETTERS

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Glenprosen headkeeper  
Bruce Cooper



In the event, the Bettie Town Glenprosen Challenge was a real shooting day with game being shot over the dogs, under the expert guidance of Glenprosen headkeeper Bruce Cooper. The chief steward was David Hall. A team of four experienced Guns – Robin Batchelor, John Billett Snr, John Billett Jnr and James Shelmerdine – had the great pleasure of shooting over the dogs. On the day, the Guns demonstrated selective shooting, picking out old birds from the covey. Glenprosen is a traditional Scottish mixed sporting estate, providing driven grouse shooting, shooting over pointers and setters, red deer stalking and fishing for salmon. The estate has the sporting rights on 16,500 acres.

Two A Panel judges – Fiona Kirk and Colin Organ – had the honour of officiating on the day in question. Fiona, Bettie’s daughter has always been passionate about pointers and setters, inheriting her love of the sport and fieldsports in general from her mother. Colin has been associated with pointers since 1963. Since then he has won 70 open stakes with

pointers and setters.

The breed teams consisted of the following members:

English setters – Dom Goutorbe (captain), Gerry Devine and Meryl Asbury.

Gordon setters – Sara Chichester (captain) and her daughter Maddy Raynor.

Irish setters – Steve Robinson (captain), Colin Forde, Brian Morris, Mark Adams and Davy O’Neill.

Pointers – Richard MacNicol (captain), Steve Lound, Carol Brown Elisabet Thorin, Linda Westron and Jon Kean.

The dogs were run in braces, each competing with dogs from the opposing team. One dog from each team was nominated to run downwind. The maximum score per dog was 60 points. The judges were looking for dogs which worked with pace and style, with even quartering on both sides where possible, and the dogs were expected to work the wind correctly. They also had to demonstrate stamina throughout the run. On game handling, the point had to be held for the Guns and the birds produced freely, but in a safe manner. The work out and clearing the ground had to be good as well.

Colin and Fiona also looked for dogs with natural ability that worked with minimal

handling, and a natural back was an advantage. The handlers were also expected to be able to instruct and place the Guns appropriately and make sure they didn’t rush to the points. There was a bonus of 10 points for dogs that produced a piece of outstanding work, and each brace had to run for 15 minutes. The length of the downwind dogs’ run was at the discretion of the judges.

Bettie would have been so proud of the Glenprosen event. Memorable is the word I would use.

### THE RESULTS

**Winning team:** The English setter team.

**Guns’ choices:** English setter: Dom Goutorbe’s FTCh Upperwood Hera.

Gordon setter: Gill Truman’s Whitepaw of Gawcott (handled by Sara Chichester).

Irish setter: Steve Robinson’s FTCh Coldcoats Rapid Meg.

English pointer: Steve Lound’s Frosted Elfin of Fleetstalk.

**Keepers’ choice:** Steve Lound’s Frosted Elfin of Fleetstalk.

**Best downwind dog:** Jon Kean’s Fearn Questren

**Top dog:** Dom Goutorbe’s FTCh Upperwood Hera.



Stunning scenery

