

## **The 12<sup>th</sup> - a Glorious Day for 117<sup>th</sup> Rydal Sheepdog Trials and Hound Show.**

Music to the ear – and to the heart.

It has been said that the best tunes have all been written – what a strange statement, but the day of the show proved that perhaps the best titles have already been taken. The overwhelming feeling of the day could best be expressed as ‘Ode to Joy’, so with due acknowledgement to Beethoven, let us set the scene.

The road from the South through Kendal and Ambleside was blocked solid with holidaymakers staycationing due to the present situation and the road from the North saw Blencathra shrouded in heavy mist which turned to rain at Thirlmere: That’s the old saying about Rydal – it’s usually either bakingly hot or really wet; which was it to be, we wondered? The proof came – every cloud *does* have a silver lining.

Just two months earlier, the Rydal committee stood in a socially distanced circle in Rydal Park and unanimously decided that the Show should if at all possible go ahead despite the uncertain times. Positive guidance from the Westmorland County Show and South Lakeland District Council, a very dedicated and capable Show Secretary, Sarah Hoggarth, and a prompt response from sponsors, tradestands and entries, all helped to deliver a first-class event. It became a good time to introduce some changes to this traditional event treasured by so many hunting people from across the country – entry tickets and programmes sold on line, in advance and a new layout to create a more sociable yet spacious hub for visitors and new risk assessments to keep everyone safe.

We had become used to the new world of Zoom meetings and social distancing, so to see people in the flesh once more, in the open air of the ground which means so much not only to us but to so many from all quarters, was truly heartening.

An open-plan layout was going to be the key. The cars, save for those bearing the disabled, were kept away from the ringsides and the spectators could have a clear, unencumbered view of proceedings. This also had the benefit of exhibitors having a clear passage from vehicles to the rings and led to a much smoother turnaround between classes.

The trade stands were in clear view of all and the catering was via food- court style mobile units; the cloud of social distancing had a silver lining.

Most joyous of all was to be able to look into the smiling eyes of old friends.

When the show day arrived, the tickets had all sold out the night before; the low mist and drizzle cleared and the sun shone all day. It was a day of such mixed emotions – joy as old friends met up after months and months of not seeing one another and sadness for those who were no longer with us.

The Sheepdog Trials started promptly at 8am with a mix of Herdwicks and Swaledales brought from Chris Hodgson’s neighbouring farm at Hart Head to the unfamiliar Rydal Park, to ensure traditional gathering routes did not upset the runners. The sheepdogs ran all day in the glorious setting of Rydal Park with the last run at 5pm. The Le Fleming Stakes, named after the family who have owned Rydal Hall and its estate since the 1400s and Stanley Le

Fleming who started Rydal Show in 1901, was won by Katie Cropper with Gin with 92 points – who was the first woman to win one man and his dog in 1990. Katie was 3 points clear of her nearest rival and Rydal regular Arthur Temple with Floss. Due to Covid and to allow more space to keep all the visitors safe, we sacrificed the second open course. This meant the Rydal Class was run on the same course as the Le Fleming Stakes and it was wonderful to see Chris Caygill from Kirkcudbright win with his dog Kim.

We paused before judging commenced to remember old friends at rest on another shore: Paul 'Jacko' Jackson, Show Committee member, Andrea Braithwaite, senior master of the Black Combe Beagles, John Hume, founding master of the Cumbria Beagles and Tom Harrison, the last huntsman of the Kendal & District Otterhounds. Presentations at the end of each class were not possible this year, so we did not get the usual opportunity to remember Mrs. Mary Gibson, donor of the trophy for Unentered Beagle Dog in memory of her late husband Colonel Leonard Gibson. Mary was a true Rydal regular, having attended since Leonard took the mastership of the Newcastle & District Beagles in 1946 upon his return from the War. She had commented that Rydal had not changed or lost its character in all those years. She had passed away in June at the grand age of 96 and it is an indication of the respect in which she was held that her memorial service the following day saw so many faces from all over the land who had been with us for the show.

The most moving tribute, however, came at the end of the day when all were gathered around the foxhound ring for the selection of the Supreme Champion of Show. 12 year old Grace Logan-Stephens spoke of her grandmother, Mary Logan, who had 60 years of active service to the Show to her credit, widow of our past Show Chairman and mother of the present holder of that office. The spouses of office bearers are so often not given the praise and recognition which they so richly deserve; teamwork is key to any success.

So very many eyes moistened as Grace spoke, fond memories of Mary intertwined with appreciation of the courage of a remarkable member of the next generation. We are proud of our past and we know that we have a future to which to look forward.

By 10.30am, the Beagle Show was underway with a record entry of 14 packs of beagles – sadly our great and loyal friends from the Sunnyland had been prevented from bringing their hounds by bureaucracy at the docks, but the team came to support the show which was a really appreciated presence and brought forth a spontaneous and well deserved round of applause.

The father and daughter judging partnership of Ian and Poppy Arnett, joint masters of the Chilmark and Clifton Foot Beagles had their work cut out. It was the first time the Catterick Beagles had shown at Rydal and they were over the moon to take home the trophy for the best unentered dog kindly given by the late Mrs. Mary Gibson with Pacho by Eton College Winter '13 out of Royal Agricultural College Pancake '15. The entered dog class was taken by the Ampleforth with Fairfax '19 on their most welcome return to Rydal. The recently introduced stallion dog class for the Patrick Till bronze hare went to the 2019 supreme champion, Palmer Marlborough Winston '16, a hound of true quality by Sandhurst & Aldershot Windsor '10 out of Woodbine '12.

The 2 couples class for the Stan Ellwood Cup went to the Palmer Marlborough. Stan was master of the Black Combe Beagles, the 'home team' for many years, having been the last huntsman of the old West Cumberland Beagles in succession to the famous Willie Tomlinson. He is well remembered as the man with enormous boots and shining dentures, a real Lakeland character.

The bitch classes opened with the Geoffrey Cragghill Trophy going to Holme & Colne Valley Mulberry by RAC Viper '17 out of Chilmark & Clifton Foot Music '14 for the best unentered bitch. Geoffrey ran the beagle show here for many years, combining it with duties as master of the Dummer Beagles and as a most colourful lecturer at the Royal Agricultural College, but his family roots were in the Lake District.

The entered class saw the David Grayling salver going to Ampleforth Famous '17, a lovely hound with Old Berkeley and Newcastle & District ancestry.

The Julian Chadwick trophy for best brood bitch was taken by Newcastle and District Divot '19.

Six worthy winners competed for the championship, which went to Palmer Marlborough Winston who went home with the De Courcey Parry Trophy for the second year running. Charles Norman 'Bay' de Courcey Parry was a native of Penrith who had numerous packs of hounds over many years, countries and indeed continents and was a most readable author. The Major George Leake trophy for best of opposite sex to the champion was taken by Ampleforth Famous.

Regulations did not permit an on-site resumé by the judges but suffice to say they had been impressed by what they had seen and had thoroughly enjoyed their day. Our new ring stewards, Deborah Benjamin and Tracey Black had received a crash course tutorial at the start of the day from Peter Turland, long-serving in that role at the Great Yorkshire Show and had risen to the occasion in true Lakeland style, they too ending the day with broad smiles.

Rydal Show field lies in the heart of the Coniston Foxhound country and as always the first event of the day in the foxhound ring was the Show of Coniston hounds, which this year was very efficiently judged by George Wilkinson, huntsman of the Eskdale and Ennerdale. Just under forty hounds competed for ten trophies with the Anthony Chapman Memorial Trophy going to Dreamer walked by the Cummings family for the fourth year and the Owen Balding Memorial Trophy going to Solo walked by Roger Westmorland. The open show of fell foxhounds brought forward entries from the seven packs which cover the Lake District. Judges this year were Richard Williams, master of the Eryri Foxhounds since 1987 and Thomas Scott, master of the Border Foxhounds since 2011.

The Eskdale and Ennerdale opened the honours by winning the best group of five, while the Ullswater took home the Dora Marley salver with Dealer and Delver. The judges thoroughly enjoyed the challenge and had a clear consensus of what made a good fell hound. The Melbreak took the unentered dog class with Cleaver, while the Eskdale and Ennerdale won the entered dog class with Clasher. Both the unentered and entered bitch classes were won by the Coniston with Solo and Dreamer back in the ribbons. Coniston Dreamer went on to

win the Championship with Eskdale and Ennerdale Clasher wining best of the opposite sex. The print kindly given by the Hounds Magazine for the best walked hound went to Lunesdale Rio walked by Louise Shaw.

The show of terriers was judged by Steve Parkin from the York and Ainsty South and Badsworth and Bramham Moor Hunt. North Lonsdale Tess, a lovely Jack Russell won the Championship with Melbreak Grip being the first recipient of the Paul "Jacko" Jackson memorial trophy for the Reserve. Jacko had left some money in his will for Rydal Show and it was felt a trophy would be the best way to remember him, a dedicated committee member who took several days off work every year to help set up and take down the show field and park cars on show day. We are delighted that his son Alex has now joined the committee to carry on the family tradition.

It was an honour to have Frank Houghton-Brown, recognised as one of the best judges of hounds in the country, take up the invitation to judge the Harriers this year. He managed to do this and write the report for Horse and Hound. It proved to be the Holcombe's day as the red rosettes kept coming; they won the first 5 classes with Hawkshead, *Ross Hulcot* '18, *Daystar* '15, *Anglezarke* and *Ross Hopeful* '18.

The Vale of Lune won the best brood bitch with *Flower* '17 taking home a beautiful new hare trophy kindly given by Sue Simmons as a tribute to one of her favourite Harrier – *Holcombe Diamond* '07. The Pendle Forest and Craven went home with the Windermere Harriers Challenge Trophy for the best group and won both couples classes. The show of Harriers closed with the Holcombe taking the championship with the truly eyecatching *Ross Hopeful* with the Vale of Lune *Flower* in reserve.

The decision on the supreme championship between the foxhound, beagle, harrier and terrier champions fell to Jamie Cameron, who has extensive experience of Beagles and Foxhounds with his active involvement with the Royal Agricultural College and the Catterick Beagles and the Zetland Foxhounds: However he said it was a very easy decision and selected *Ross Hopeful*, shown by the Holcombe Harriers, as this year's winner of the Bruce Logan Memorial Trophy with the Reserve going to *Coniston Dreamer*.

Another event which drew the crowds in the afternoon were the 3 trail hound races. 4 energetic trailers leave an aniseed trail over the surrounding fells, while visitors place their bets and then take their place on the natural amphitheatre near the finish line to see the winning hounds come in. This year, *Copperfield* took the Open and the John Benson Memorial Challenge Trophy, *Winterfell* was the winning Puppy and the Open restricted title went to the aptly named *Dash*.

True thanks are due to all who made this day possible after 18 months of darkness, to the committee, landowners, farmers and all who give of their time and resources to create such a worthwhile experience and to the audience who came in really impressive numbers to support this great Lakeland tradition of sheepdogs, hounds, terriers, trailhounds, gundogs, stickmakers and of course to the young handlers, who will long remember the joy of the day, the glorious 12<sup>th</sup>, 2021.

We look forward to welcoming you all back on Thursday, 11<sup>th</sup> August 2022.