

## **MAJOR H. A. WILSON'S DOGS**

by Amelia Jessel

It occurred to me that many of our newer members might not realise the enormous contribution that Harry Wilson has made to Flatcoats both in Ireland and over here. So I wrote and asked him to send me a list of awards won by his dogs in field trials. This is a most impressive document recording the field trial careers of 8 Flatcoats from 1954 to 1978. Certainly in post war years there has been nothing to touch his achievements in the Flatcoat field trial world.

Between 1954 and 1959, his dog Pewcroft Page bred by Stanley O'Neill from Sweep of Riverside and Pewcroft Feg, gained FT awards which included three seconds and 2 firsts. Presumably the latter were not both won in qualifying stakes or he would have been a field trial champion. I know he came close to gaining his title and if he had not died comparatively young, he might well have been Harry's first F.T. champion. Within four years of his last win, Hartshorn Midnight, a bitch by Ch.Woodlark out of Nesfield Stratton was placed 3rd in the Ulster Retriever Club Stake, and two years later she came Reserve in the Irish Retriever Championship Stake.

Meanwhile the glittering career of Int. F.T.Ch. Hartshorn Sorrel (Jay) was beginning. Owned by Harry's daughter Helen, but handled by Harry in all her trials, her first win was, appropriately, in the Flatcoated Retriever Society's Non Winner Stake in 1964. She went from strength to strength running in Field Trials mainly in Ireland and Scotland and gaining 25 awards, finally coming 3rd in the F.C.R.S. Open Stake in 1972 at the age of ten. During these eight years she won no less than ten first prizes, nine of them in Open Stakes. She won the Irish Retriever Championship and the All Ireland Golden Retriever Club Stakes in 1970. Six of her awards were in breed stakes so the remaining 19 were all open to any variety of retriever.

I had the honour of being host to her during a period when foot and mouth disease prevented her returning to Ulster at her running in stakes in Scotland. As Harry planned to return to England to run her in the Flatcoat Stake, I looked after her for about a month. She was the perfect guest and soon denied my fears that she might run off and disappear or come to any harm. Not only did she curl up out of arm's way on the floor, she settled down every night on an old coat in the bedroom next to mine, she remained obediently to heel until told to do otherwise, and ate up everything I put before her. She was a medium to small sized bitch with one of the kindest expressions I have seen, and a lovely dark eye. Although not a great show specimen, she was well made with plenty of bone; nothing coarse about her anywhere. Quiet and unassuming in the home or car, she was a real 'fizzer' in the field although well under Harry's impeccable control.

Sadly, she has only passed down a minimum of progeny from, I believe, only one litter. The only direct descendant that, to my knowledge, has been bred from is Hartshorn Fleck of Lingwood and hence Lingwood Medlar the sire of Tarncourt Crofter and Charm. She did, of course, have several brothers and sisters that have passed on progeny - notably Hartshorn Samphire who sired Ch. Black Fritta of Yarlaw, and Hartshorn Sweetbriar who produced Colin Well's Ch. Woodpoppy and Suzy Wong.

Halfway through the time when Jay was winning, Harry's other dog. F.T.Ch.Nesfield Michael

by Blakeholme Joiner out of Hartshorn Midnight, was embarking on his career. Born in 1965, he won his first trial in Scotland at the age of two. From then until 1972, he gained thirteen more awards including a 2nd in the Irish Retriever Championship twice, and six firsts in open stakes in Ireland and Scotland. Unfortunately he died early but not before he had sired a litter - the only one, I believe - producing, with Hartshorn Midnight, a dog named Nesfield Hastie that gained a Certificate of Merit in 1969. As far as I know the buck stopped there which is a tragedy for the Flatcoat breed.

In 1973, Bidy of Claverdon, an outcross bitch from the little used Ponsbourne line, and a Claverdon Comet daughter, came 2nd in a 24 dog All Aged stake of the Scottish Field Trial Association. Once again, misfortune struck and Bidy died at the beginning of what would surely have been another illustrious career trained and handled by Harry, losing a litter of puppies as well.

His present dog, Glendower Tarquin, has won a Reserve award in a stake in Ulster but does not show such promise as some of his predecessors.

Through ill health, Harry has been unable to do as much with his dogs recently as he would have liked. That he has contributed more to the working side of post war Flatcoats is very evident from these records. It is a pity, however, that this tremendous achievement has not resulted in more progeny being available from which, no doubt, the breed would have gained enormously on the working side.

Hartshorn Sorrel, bred in England but owned in Ireland by Miss Helen Wilson, whose father was Sorrel's trainer and only handler, gained the title twice under Kennel Club and Irish Kennel Club Rules - thus achieving the courtesy title of International Field Trial Champion. She won two Irish Championships and nine Open Stakes, including victories in England, Scotland, Ulster and Eire, and was placed in 12 others, finishing first more often than in any other position, a record which can seldom have been surpassed.



Harry Wilson and Harthorn Sorrel