

THE ROLE OF THE WORKING CLUMBER SPANIEL SOCIETY

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Introduction

I really shouldn't be here!

Believe me, I have no wish to be controversial. I like a quiet life. You'd think, in a world as small as that of the Clumber spaniel, there'd be little room for disagreement. But I am forgetting a simple fact: wherever two people come together to discuss animals, they will be unable to agree. Over their children, maybe they will. Over their dogs, no.

OK. I'm exaggerating, I know, looking around me. I hope!

I'm here to present the work of the Working Clumber Spaniel Society in the UK. [Slide 1 – logo]
To explain its aims, its activities, its achievements so far – as well as its vision of the future.

The most significant thing about the society is that it exists at all. It should not. There should be no place for it. And I say that as one of its co-founders and perhaps the main architect of its positioning and policy.

Background

Let's look back briefly. Well beyond our own involvement with the breed. At, say, the turn of the century. The year is 1900. In England, the first field trials had taken place a year or two earlier. Clumber spaniels were at the very top of the honours lists. And not just in competition. In the field, the breed had become widespread and widely respected. As a sound and reliable working dog.

Of course, there was a handful of people who showed their dogs and bred them for that purpose. And the seeds of disagreement, over type, were already sown and growing. But showing – even breeding dogs to pure pedigrees in general – was a comparatively new activity. And not a mainstream one. Not yet. Working breeds – the Clumber included – were still estimated for what they could do. Not for what they looked like.

What they could do determined *how* they looked. Other than, as I say, for the fringe of owners who wanted to exhibit them. And what did the breed look like? [Slide 2 – John Emms painting]
Today's owners may disagree, but it is hard to argue with contemporary evidence.

Notice a few obvious features. The dogs have colour. They are smaller than today. They are lighter in weight. The breed standard of the day (and until the year 1909) specified weights of 40-45 lb. They have muzzles. [Slide 3 – Tom Heywood painting] They are plain of face – no folds of skin falling into their eyes. The coat is that of a typical working spaniel – a limited amount of feathering. In short, they are practical, functional. Free from the exaggerations we see today. Yet they are all Clumber. [Slide 4 – Arthur Wardle painting] There is no mistaking this breed. The difference is these are dogs that were expected to work, and work hard. For several hours without real rest. Perhaps several days a week.

How, I ask myself, would the typical Clumber owner of the day have responded if told that with careful selective breeding, with improved feeding, he could have a dog like this: [Slide 5 – Crufts winner] the Clumber spaniel of the future? For you and me, the Clumber spaniel of today. He'd not have been impressed.

There has been much change. Colour has almost gone. Why? Dogs are bigger and heavier. They have more head, more coat, more bone, a longer back, etc. And that is just what you can see. What you don't see has changed too. The ease with which they are trained. The natural aptitude for work. The stamina. The soft mouth. Or, for those who ignore work characteristics, consider instead the dominance.

Do you think *any* of these features, seen and unseen, have improved? It's right to expect some change. The breed should develop. Evolution, yes. Revolution, no.

And we haven't yet considered a comparison of health. Why? – because there is no *evidence* that Clumbers of 1900 were less prone to eye disease, hip disease, skin disorders or back trouble. No evidence, that's true. Yet these were never referred to in accounts of the time. Writers had much to say about the breed, but warnings about its soundness were not sounded. It's a safe bet, then, that the health status of the breed was also much greater.

Let's put the past behind us. And look ahead. There's a choice. We can go on doing more of the same. Ensuring the breed gets bigger, more exaggerated, less practical, less sound. We don't have to try hard. Just do what we've been doing these last few decades. Where will we stop? With a Clumber of 100 kilos? Do we then wake up and start questioning what we are doing?

Think a 100 kilo Clumber is ridiculous? Of course it is. The maximum now – give or take a few larger exceptions – is 50 kilos. Yet the weight in the UK standard has doubled during this century. To a Victorian owner, a 50 kilo Clumber would have been an equally ridiculous idea.

So, do we carry on as we have? Or do we take a decision now, and mend our ways now?

The UK experience

Let me take you back in time again. Only not so far. A few years ago, when I first took an interest in Clumbers, I was amazed I had never come across such a beautiful, unlikely-looking working dog. It is a reaction I see in others, to this day, when they meet me with Clumbers out shooting. That was a little over 20 years ago.

Since 1975, when I took on my first Clumber, part of my devotion to the breed has been aimed at ensuring that it *will* always be there, as a potential working companion for the sportsman.

In 1984 the Working Clumber Spaniel Society was formed. I said earlier, it shouldn't exist. It's significant that it does. And that it has grown – in numbers, in stature, in influence.

It started as a means of giving a voice, giving power to those interested in the breed other than as an ornament, with its health and working characteristics in decline. The fact that no fewer than 70 people subscribed from the start made something clear: there was a large body of interest and opinion not represented by the UK breed club.

In the nearly nine years since, enrolments have exceeded 350. These are not breeders, but ordinary owners. Though mostly not interested in disputes with other Clumber opinion or with the Kennel Club, these individuals – for the good of the breed they admire – have submitted themselves to strict rules and common objectives. Because they agree with them.

It is significant, isn't it, that a separate grouping springs up, to devote itself with commitment and enthusiasm to what they see as the enduring characteristics of the breed? These are people whose needs have been failed, or are not met, by the established breed club.

Why significant? Not because the UK is the home of the breed. But because the UK has, it seems, gone *furthest* from the original type. Done too little *positive* work to preserve and enhance function. Done too much *negative* work to develop an unsound and impractical animal. Because, in the UK, the future of the breed is under greater threat than anywhere else.

Selective breeding is just that: selective. You select the characteristics you want to emphasise. Some have higher heritability than others. They are achieved quicker. But you tend to get what you select for. The whole history of animal breeding relies on it.

So, if you want Clumbers that are lighter in colour, bigger, heavier, longer in back, longer in coat, shorter in muzzle, heavier in head and brow, you wind up with a show champion of today. But you do so with two kinds of costs. Cost one is the damage you have done by selecting those features. Cost two is the damage you have done by ignoring the important features – the ones you have not selected for while picking the irrelevant ones.

It is in the UK that the development of the Clumber has taken a wrong turning. Maybe elsewhere too. I have no direct experience of other countries. Here in Sweden, from what I know, show dogs have not departed from the main road in the same way. It helps that they are required to demonstrate more realistic working characteristics than in the UK where the qualifying field test for a full champion is so easy, it is no test at all.

Our society has a clear sense of direction – its purpose is to restore the breed to the main road, to bring it back from the diversion that leads to a dead end.

But if the society arose as a remedy to a peculiarly British set of conditions, it may tempt those in other countries to breathe a sigh of relief and dismiss our experience as of no value.

I agree, it is dangerous to generalise from the particular. To see the UK as a model for elsewhere. But there is danger for the breed anywhere in the world where the demands of the show ring assume exaggerated importance, where the breeding of Clumbers is almost exclusively undertaken by exhibitors. Do not be deluded about the lack of demand or commitment from the field. The pressures of competition are what drive development in all breeds. And the shooting field, other than field trials and tests for which few Clumbers are now entered, is not competitive and therefore has not proved so creative. We aim to change this.

There are important lessons, then, from the UK experience, that I am here to commend to those among you with the long-term well-being of the breed at heart.

And I am encouraged by the theme of this symposium – the future and the health of the Clumber spaniel – to believe that you may be glad to know of our successes, and to apply these lessons where they suit your circumstances.

Who am I to talk?

Who am I to talk? Firstly, I'm not a scientist. You have heard today from an eminent geneticist and a leading veterinarian. What I have to say is based on experience, on experiment. Conclusions are empirical, anecdotal. What I present is not evidence, in a strictly scientific sense. But reject it at your risk. My views are shaped by hard fact and by listening to scientists. I can only appeal to you to do the same.

When our leading geneticist writes about hip dysplasia, I read, and I learn. Here is what Dr Malcolm Willis wrote last year:

In Britain, progress has been minimal and at best breeds are holding their own and not getting worse though individual breeders are advancing. Too many breeders in high risk breeds do nothing in an obstinate British belief that they have the right to do as they like which includes damaging the breed they profess to care about.

This was a general complaint, in his book *Practical Genetics for Dog Breeders* (1992). It wasn't aimed at us, at Clumber spaniels! Yet progress *has* been minimal. At best the breed *is* just holding its own. There are individual breeders who *are* advancing. Well, one or two. And there *are* too many breeders doing nothing while clinging to obstinate policies that have been proved to be wrong. I'll have more to say on this refusal to listen to scientific advice shortly.

Let me very briefly give you my credentials. Fifteen years or so ago I first got up and spoke at a meeting of Clumber owners in England, and it was easy for them to ignore me. They had been in the breed longer. They knew better. I have to tell those people that my message has not changed much. Only my experience *has*. And that is *why* the message is substantially the same. Only, strengthened by that experience.

In discussing my experience, I'm not boasting to you. But it may be news to most of you. The record of my dogs given in the Grayson and Furness book (*The Clumber Spaniel*, 1991) was incomplete, and its significance largely disregarded. The achievements by one dog, Venaticus Duncan, were ignored. Several weeks before a Clumber won Crufts, he was the focus of attention that was equally historic. In winning a field trial (for spaniels other than cocker and English springer) and a week later taking 4th in an all-aged stake for any variety spaniel, beating a springer that is now a field trial champion in the run-off, he was contributing to a revival in the perceived fortunes of working Clumbers that no one in the UK who is involved with Gundogs is not aware of. No Clumber had taken such awards since before the First World War. [Slide 6 – Venaticus Duncan]

The dog is the top working specimen in living memory. He is a third generation working dog. His offspring are fourth generation working-bred. That's how long purpose-breeding has been practised. Fortune has smiled on my efforts and he is proving a prepotent sire, a producer of pups with his own qualities from a variety of bitches, and a hip improver with a progeny record that's second best in the breed. Up to last Friday he was the best!

Together with his dam and her sire and dam, these four of my Clumbers have been almost – though I'm glad to say not exclusively – the only Clumbers seen in field trials. They have between them obtained more than two-thirds of all field trial awards made to Clumbers since before the Second World War. Which means, inevitably, that I am intimately identified with the fortunes of working Clumbers.

It makes it almost impossible for me to have a rest from Clumbers, even if I wanted to!

It's got to be said: few other Clumber owners have had a go at trials. They had plenty of reasons not to enter trials, even apart from their dogs not being good enough. Trials have become a bit refined, into tests of speed and style that do not favour slower, less flamboyant types. Or they may simply not have my thick skin, that tends to shrug off the hostility and prejudice shown by many judges in springer trials. And this, too, has counted against the awards gained by Clumbers.

Let me give you a couple of examples. I ran Beryl [Slide 7 – Venaticus Beryl the Peril] in a trial on very demanding ground – steep hillsides thick with brambles and rhododendron. She was really quite impressive. Many of the spectators, officials and fellow handlers congratulated me, delighted to have a funny spaniel in the awards. Or so they thought. At the end of the day the senior judge sought me out to tell me how good she had been. "I didn't know a Clumber could work like that," he said. "But I won't be giving her anything!"

This was no isolated incident. It almost exactly duplicated an earlier occasion when her sire [Slide 8 – Maladetta Tallman] in the same part of the country – even down to the words spoken privately by the judge. Over that judge, I was able to get my own back, though I had to wait ten years to do so, when Duncan was top performing spaniel in a team at the Game Fair, beating his cocker that had twice won the Cocker Championship.

Judges, particularly in springer trials – we mostly call them “any variety” stakes – have a problem one has to recognise. They know so little of the work of a Clumber – they may never have seen one before – they are not sure what the breed is capable of. They may not know whether the work they are seeing is good, for a Clumber, or bad. If in doubt, they’ll leave it out! Or take the easy way and try to put the dog out.

Intelligent, open-minded judges are forced to reflect on the real function of spaniels, as effective game finders, not supercharged mechanical pheasant sweepers. Sometimes, they come to knowledge too late: one judge, who had put Beryl out of a trial on a technicality that was at best doubtful, when we met again some years later told me how he had always regretted his negative decision. But for every judge with the courage to recognise good work by a Clumber against its flashy cousins, there are several without it. At the extreme was one judge who, when my bitch Susie came into the line, sat on his shooting stick in a huff and wouldn’t move.

So, experience is not at issue, I hope. And if I may quote from Dr Willis again, “Experience is only valuable if you learn from it.” I fear that in the UK too many of those breeding – and influencing the development of the breed – have closed their minds as well as their eyes. “Experience” – to quote the author and playwright Oscar Wilde – “is the name men give to their mistakes.”

OK, so I am closely allied with the revival of the Clumber as a working breed. It’s good to have a few silver trophies to clean. But what I am more proud of is the establishment of the Working Clumber Spaniel Society and its achievements. Let’s get back to that subject.

A child of woe

The society was born in strife. It wasn’t a case of a few happy and dedicated Clumber owners getting together to share their interest in working their dogs. It was that, but they felt compelled to create a unit, separate and distinct from the breed club, specifically to distance themselves from that club and to achieve something quite different from it.

For all its achievements – and I know it has a spokesman who can describe them better than I can – by the mid-1970s the UK Clumber Spaniel Club was entirely dedicated, in practice if not in theory, to the showing of Clumbers. It was therefore supervising the contraction of breed interest, and breed development, to a Clumber that was good really for only one thing: being seen in a dog show.

The competitive and rather artificial environment of the dog show is not a well-balanced place in which to safeguard the health and the future of the Clumber spaniel (our theme today). Without the influence of the needs of working, even of pet owners, to inhibit the concentration on show points, exaggeration of the breed is inevitable. You can argue this is not so, but whatever the breed, showing causes exaggeration.

If the standard says long in back and heavy in head, breeders – and judges on the same bandwagon – select for those features. The power of selective breeding cannot be ignored. Select for features and you get those features. But it tends to be overdone. So you get *longer* in back, *heavier* in head. It’s not only in *our* breed. Small dogs get smaller, long-haired dogs longer haired. Doesn’t matter what the feature is, dog showing emphasises it. The effect is to exaggerate the differences between breeds, as well as the characteristics within them.

So the Clumber, always the heaviest of the land spaniels but at one time a working dog only, has consistently got heavier. As I have described earlier.

Virtually without exception, during the period I am talking about, say the mid-1970s to the mid-1980s, no one was breeding Clumbers for anything other than to show. If, like me, you wanted a Clumber as a working gundog, you got one from more or less solid show breeding over several generations.

Interest in working Clumbers was not enormous, but it had never died. Problem was, all the stock had to come from breeders who were not selecting for working traits. So the quality of the work was lower – unquestionably – than from a purpose-bred animal. Poor work, poor health: it was a cycle that spelled decline.

Yet, because breeders of what were show-bred animals sold dogs to working homes, some of them had working lives. So what did breeders say to prospective working owners? “Yes, of course my dogs work. All Clumbers will work. A ‘working Clumber’? There’s no such thing.” At best this was self-delusion. It *still* is. Four generations of working Clumbers give the lie to that sort of talk. Of course, 14, 40 generations will do so even better.

By gaining some field trial successes with substantially show-bred Clumbers, I gained a small reputation as the man who knew about working Clumbers. People contacted me. People who shared my view that real improvement would come from purpose-breeding. That the breed was not safe in the hands of show breeders. That the breed club was not giving responsible, balanced leadership. That consultations by the Kennel Club over changes to the breed standard should include the opinion of working owners.

In 1982 I had presented a paper to the breed club’s annual meeting, written at my request by Dr Willis. In it, the country’s leading expert gave it to us straight. On the proposed weight increases in the breed standard, he wrote, and I quote:

Such weight increases will be accompanied by increased rates of growth in early life, increased stress on bones and joints and are *certain* to lead to increased HD risk and incidence. It is highly likely that other bone/growth defects will ensue and we shall see elbow troubles, spinal problems and other bone defects increasing in this breed.

Does that not strike any chords?

He considered that to increase weight at all, still less by the sums envisaged, working qualities would be impaired. He went on to advise: “Rather than seek to increase weight, breeders should contemplate reducing existing values so that maximum weights drop by some 5 kg.”

He concluded: “The proposals show limited understanding of the biological consequences to the individual dog and to the breed as a population. They must be rejected by the Kennel Club.”

What was the breed club’s reaction? He was rejected. What does he know about Clumbers, they said!

It was then I gave up on the breed club. Behind me I left their conviction that I was misguided or mischievous. I left them in hope that younger, more open-minded members without entrenched positions to defend, would in time gain in influence. And I left them in possession of a research fund I had endowed with several hundred pounds from the sale of prints, to promote better health in general and in particular to repay the costs of having hip X-rays scored.

A group of like-minded working Clumber owners gathered alongside me, people with a very different vision. I wrote a mission statement, sent it to those I could interest, and an inaugural meeting was held in September 1984. The objects enshrined then are unchanged today [Slide 9]:

Objects of the society:

- To promote and encourage training for work
- To restore physical soundness and working qualities
- To encourage breeding from sound, work-proven specimens
- To hold educational and competitive working events
- To resist moves to alter type which may damage utility

They meet the needs of all involved in working Clumbers. They offer the breed a future as more than ornaments good only for winning rosettes. The society sought to be something new [Slide 10]:

The society created:

- The forum for the views of working owners
- The focus for interest – sporting and general
- The force for revival of a genuine work-bred gundog

... to which end [Slide 11]:

The society provided:

- The stimulus for debate and change
- The structure for its ambitious aims to be met
- The strength of a corporate body to empower individuals

And demanded, in turn:

- The support of those individuals to stay strong – a commitment to its objects

Working Clumber owners no longer lacked a voice.

The society was a rejection of what the breed club stood for. The breed club, in turn, found it necessary to try to persuade the Kennel Club to reject the society's bid to become an accredited organisation. This was an attempt to smother it at birth. In the UK, if the Kennel Club doesn't recognise a new club, it cannot operate: no one in dogs, and no other club, can have anything to do with it for fear they will themselves be outlawed by the ruling body. How near the breed club came to success I do not know. I do know it took us 18 months to get recognition. Just as well, as we'd have gone to law to get it.

The breath of new life

Over the next few years a number of new activities were undertaken [Slide 12]:

Events organised to meet the society's goals include

- Training with professionals and breed specialists
- Supervised beating and shooting days on shoots
- Evening of films of the Spaniel Championships to view the standard
- Hawking over Clumbers – demonstration/participation
- Working tests – breed, other "minority" breeds, and AV – the last to prevent comfortable isolation: it is not enough to do well in a breed-confined environment; we need to be seen in more open, more challenging arenas where the public do make comparisons
- Working matches with Welsh springers and Irish water spaniels
- "Warm game tests" – informal/practice field trials
- Field trials under KC rules for "minority" spaniel breeds

- Working Ability Assessments – the primary part of our own Breeding Commendation Scheme

Field trials have been a particular success over the past five seasons. This type of event we revived in 1988. It had not been held for six years by the Spaniel Club, its traditional organiser. In place of its inertia, depression about the lack of support and gloom about its expense, we created a buoyant spirit of optimism, a fully- or over-subscribed entry in each year, and we actually make money at it because we have gained sponsorship both from Febo Professional dog food and financial contributions from all the other “minority” spaniel breed clubs. All except one.

Working Ability Assessments are a completely new concept [Slide 13]. They are not a field trial, not even a field test:

- They are under actual field conditions, like a walked-up rough shoot
- Judges shoot over dogs – as if to consider recommending to a friend: a gun in hand creates a different mindset from a notebook and pencil
- Dogs continuously assessed: competence, contribution to sport, pleasure given
- Game finding ability is the quest – based on the breed’s characteristics
- Aims: above all, to hunt, with drive/style; be steady to flush-shot-fall; fetch fur/feather from cover/water, tenderly; be controlled/responsive; no whining
- Not a test of training
- No competition, no elimination unless interfering with sport
- Entries limited so dogs can work all day, not in short runs
- Grade A for fulfilment, grade B with one endorsement, else fail

They are part of our Breeding Commendation scheme, perhaps the most comprehensive screening system in the gundog world [Slide 14 – Breeding Commendation certificate]. This records natural ability as defined through our Working Ability Assessment (WAA), the HD score (otherwise confidential to the owner), and two factors which have to be certified by a vet: eyes – that they are free from entropion and don’t appear to have been operated on; and weight – in good condition, i.e. not after a crash diet. The certificate is not issued at all until a dog has been graded for a WAA – because we see work as the fundamental requirement.

We lost the case with the Kennel Club over the breed standard. Despite our vociferous opposition to the breed club’s proposal – they wanted to raise the defined weight of the breed to 100 lb (a bit over 45 kilos) – and despite the scientific evidence presented, the Kennel Club changed the standard. Not as much as the breed club wanted – thank goodness for small mercies – but where the previous permitted weights had been 55-70 lb (25 to about 32 kg) for dogs, and 45-60 lb (about 20-27 kg) for bitches, the new “ideal weights” were expressed as 80 lb (34 kg) for dogs, 65 lb (29.5 kg) for bitches.

The new “ideals” were larger, in both cases, than the previous permitted maxima (which Dr Willis had wanted cut by 5 kg). Remember, these compare with a standard at the beginning of the century – when the breed was at its working peak – of 40-45 lb (that’s about 18-20 kilos).

Remember, too, one of our objects was to resist moves to alter the breed’s type which may damage its utility. That was in our rules. We now suggested to the Kennel Club that we’d need to change the wording to reflect our opposition to the standard imposed against our will. It refused to allow such dissent.

So, when the UK Kennel Club seeks, as it now proposes, to introduce a breeders’ code of ethics and a “recognised breeders register”, we say: you have nothing to teach us about ethics, nothing to teach us about recommended breeding practices. And we have told it so.

Instead, we can point to what the Kennel Club itself describes as its overriding duty “to promote the general improvement of dogs”. And we say: take the beam out of your eye before trying to remove splinters from the eyes of others.

If it was a failure to impose a change of character on the Kennel Club, I believe the failure will prove to be its for not seeing sense, not ours for trying to make it.

Winning hearts and minds

The conspicuous success the society has enjoyed has been in its communications. Let's look at this central programme [Slide 15]:

The communications mission – key objectives

- To reawaken awareness of the unique characteristics of a sporting breed
- To raise the issues of soundness and purpose-breeding for work among potential users
- To educate the sporting public to demand a work-bred animal, and all to require evidence of soundness in breeding programmes
- To influence the show world – breeders, judges, KC – to moderate exaggeration in dogs bred primarily for exhibition

This informed... [Slide 16]:

Strategy and action plan

- Media relations campaign
- Focus of opinion and meeting of minds in WCSS for credibility and corporate strength
- Grow the society by raising voice/profile, activities, membership – to increase influence over breed's renaissance
- Gain veterinary endorsement for the proposition
- Attract opinion formers to adopt breed and join society, i.e. prominent and influential field sports participants
- Accept discipline of marketplace on viability of activities
- Participate within the public eye to demonstrate potential by example
- Mount marketing programme to place reinforcing products

What we did and what we said about it was based on what had already been achieved [Slide 17]:

Implementation and communication – built upon...

- Scientific paper by top canine geneticist in the UK, on size
- Establishment of research fund
- Extension of hip scheme, analysis showing breed as worst of all
- Participation in field trials and working tests
- Publishing of prints/cards as tactical product placement
- Formation of the society, with clear definition, detailed objects, common ideals

We built and developed the process [Slide 18]:

Implementation and communication – developed further by...

- New events tailored to the breed's strengths and needs
- Articles and letters to magazines and books, briefing journalists, issuing news releases and photos
- Breeding Commendation scheme backed by BVA (used as model by two other breeds)
- Sustaining controversy as a debating platform
- Attracting Febo sponsorship and support of four other clubs
- Undertaking direct mail recruitment campaign through our initiative of using the KC database, its first use by another body

- Issuing a newsletter to help bond dispersed membership

Outputs and outcomes, judged in terms of meeting objectives, were really unprecedented [Slide 19]:

Results and evaluation

- Competition successes of historic significance
- Return to respect – e.g. warm reception on appearing at the Game Fair (1990)
- Exposure in sector and national media with unparalleled focus on key issues
- Measured response to publicity proving its influence (see below)
- Growth of X-raying shows movement to responsibility, leaving diminishing rump of diehards beyond influence
- Growth of the society – in membership, in influence
- Financial security of the society – through meeting members’ needs and attracting external sponsorship and support
- Consistently high profile and strong voice driven by innovative activities, outspoken comments and provocation of issues
- Attraction of HRH the Princess Royal as owner and patron, respected for her judgment
- Crufts win by a show specimen was an unplanned consequence of our campaign
- Selected products placed with owners world-wide as enduring influencers

Let’s take a quick look at the strength of that media campaign [Slide 20 – montage of newspaper and magazine coverage].

For instance, in the first two months of 1991, media tracked inquiries to the society numbered 68. The quantity was matched by quality – 49 stated support for its programme or position, 42 applied for puppies, 29 enrolled as members.

Our sponsor was not unimpressed. Febo calculated that its modest outlay gave it the best return of any of its promotions.

And of all the press coverage, the most influential item of all was this, the cover story of *Country Life* in January 1991 [Slide 21].

It was good to get recognition for the campaign [Slide 22 – certificate of Sword of Excellence from the Institute of Public Relations].

It was the very best kind of public relations campaign. Not just communications, but of real substance. Concentrating on good communications is not enough. Essential is the question of behaviour. You cannot examine your own behaviour critically unless you decide “What sort of organisation are we?” “What are our ethics, our goals? What do we represent?” Then you can decide your principles, how you want to behave, how to be responsible, but even more, how to be *accountable*. Then you can start to communicate, from that sound platform, and carry opinion with you.

What has our programme done? In short, it has changed public perceptions of the breed. We’d found we couldn’t change the supply side – the policies and practices of the main – show – breeders. But by a process of creating awareness and educating the sporting and general public about the issues affecting the breed, we have shaped the demand side.

If prospective buyers require proof only of soundness – even if they don’t need proof of working ability – breeders, even show breeders, will meet that demand. Not all. Some will be ostriches. Or dinosaurs. But many will. Increasingly, more will. Soon it will become essential to success.

Let's look at HD

No discussion about the health and the future of our beautiful breed can be complete without the four-letter word. The part they wiggle. Their hips! [At this point the hips and a femur of my first dog, Bertie (Maladetta Tallman) are passed around for examination.] Not very big, these hip and thigh bones, to support an active dog with an "ideal" weight of 80 lb.

As you've heard, we do have a scheme to encourage hip X-raying. It's part of a broader, balanced screening process. It makes no sense to concentrate on hips to the exclusion of other characteristics, good as well as bad.

But we have to remember that of all breeds where hip scores are assessed, the Clumber has the worst average score. By some margin. We have to accept that in hip terms, the Clumber is the pariah. It's the dog people think of when they think of bad hips.

Scoring has grown. At the last count (end of last week) the figure was 335 dogs scored. Good, isn't it? That's over a period of ten years. So we still get scores on only a fraction of dogs bred. The pace is quickening, though, and more owners now see it as important. Attitudes among many breeders remain entirely negative, just as they were in the early '80s when I first tried to interest them and first got the BVA/GSDL scheme extended to Clumbers. It meant Clumbers were only the second or third breed to be involved – long before the Kennel Club dropped its old pass/fail system and modelled its scheme on the same GSDL scheme.

Interestingly, mean scores have remained constant, at the 44-46 mark. Latest figure is 44.03.

Dr Willis views that as nil progress in terms of improvement. I'm not so sure. I suspect that a larger proportion of known or suspected bad-hipped dogs were not scored in the past. The true picture then could have been worse. Now a more representative sample is scored, I believe.

That's in spite of vets still advising clients that a dog's X-rays are so bad they're not worth scoring. The same vets who advise clients that a dog with what they see as bad hips shouldn't be bred. They may examine a dozen Clumbers – in a lifetime's practice. Yet they give this kind of advice. What they see as bad hips could be hips at half, or a quarter, of the breed average. Indicating, if anything, that the dog should be actively considered for breeding.

By the way, not everything that you do here in Sweden is helpful. One of our problems may surprise you. It's not a very common problem, as far as I'm aware. But it illustrates how a good idea can be abused.

In Sweden – where there's been more progress on HD screening than anywhere else in the world – you have your own hip scoring scheme. It's not so much a scoring scheme as a banding scheme. And it's not known widely in the UK.

So, when a generally respected UK Clumber spaniel breeder talks of a dog as having a score of 4, people are impressed. Sounds excellent.

I have to tell you that this goes on. Your scheme, for all its merits, is being used by UK Clumber colleagues to tell lies. I hope it is not a common fraud. But it is happening. I've recently been told about one instance, and I'd heard a similar complaint before. It really is most depressing!

For the record, your band 4 is the equivalent of a score in Britain of 51-106 – i.e. the worst dogs, those higher than the breed average. UK owners should understand that to obtain scores better than the breed average they will have to be offered a Swedish band 2 or better.

Conclusion

We as a society can look back to our formation, and see the high ideals, which we set then, now achieving tangible results.

We've been accused of dividing the breed. So we have. I hope we have helped to marginalise the excessive and exaggerated. I hope we have helped to restore the practical, sound, sensible type of dog, the dog whom our great-grandfathers respected, as the mainstream. I pray we have brought the Clumber back on track.

Where does the society stand now? We have achieved good things in terms of education, awareness and positioning. They must continue. Yet even if we go away, into oblivion, our mark will remain on the breed.

But we do need to do more breeding. Our own people, not by inclination breeders, mostly, need to be more active as breeders. Producing litters from the best workers, those proven by our Breeding Commendation scheme.

We need to do more than take care to eliminate faults. We need to select for positive features, not be content to avoid negative ones. We need excellent working dogs, dogs of bold, confident character, strong and active dogs, not indifferent specimens free from HD and entropion.

We need to be more active as breeders, to be more active as selectors.

We need to be active enough as breeders to meet demand for work-bred pups.

We may need to undertake the importation of suitable blood from other countries.

We may need to look at creating contracts with our puppy buyers to promote hip testing even more, and to get feedback on sires.

We know we need more experienced and competitive owners, and will be creating more competition platforms to attract them into the breed. Next season, for the first time, there will be three field trials for so-called "minor breeds", possibly even four. For one of those we have been invited to Sandringham estate at the gracious invitation of Her Majesty the Queen.

I thank you for your attention. Why listen to the Working Clumber Spaniel Society, when 90 per cent of interest in the breed is not in working?

I'll tell you why. [Slide 23 – Duncan leaping into canal] Because working dogs can't be unsound. They can't be exaggerated. Working requirements, quite simply, are what will save the breed.