

Sandra Stevenson

I have always lived in Ayrshire, Scotland, where we have superb countryside and beaches to walk dogs. As a child, there were always dogs around; we lived on a farm for a while so there were collies, terriers and gundogs to take my interest. The first dog I was allowed to own was a cross-breed and then we had our first Jack Russell Terrier, at that time not a recognised breed by the Kennel Club. I bred a few litters whilst still at school but the highlights for me were the few unlicensed shows where I could take them in the ring. I had quite a bit of success with these dogs and it really started my passion for dog shows. It was not until I finished University that I could consider buying a pedigree dog that I could show but when I did, the only breed for me was the Flatcoat.

I have owned and exhibited Flatcoated Retrievers since 1988 and was lucky enough to become very close friends with John and Maureen Scott and Maureen's late parents, Scott & Sheila Dalziel of the very successful Branchalwood kennel. They helped and supported me immensely in the early years. I bred the first 'Steelriver' litter in 1993 and only breed when I wish to keep a puppy myself so there have only been 11 litters to date, all are descended from my foundation bitch, Sh Ch Branchalwood Dalwhinnie of Steelriver who was top brood bitch 2001. From these litters, I have bred 4 UK and one overseas champion, including the Crufts BOB winner Sh Ch Steelriver Catch The Breeze who was my very special bitch. Her progeny have achieved success in the show ring and also produced well themselves. Several other Steelrivers have won CCs and RCCs and I am currently showing my 5th generation. There have also been some good working dogs from my lines and I am enjoying training my 2 young bitches when time allows. Other dogs I have bred have been influential for other breeders and I am very proud of the legacy they have passed on. I also owned Welsh Springer Spaniels for about 20 years and bred the first full champion bitch from Scotland, Ch Steelriver Rysa who was the foundation of the successful Slapestones kennel.

I am a committee member of the Flatcoated Retriever Club of Scotland and have had a number of roles within the Club including show secretary for 11 years. I have been judging gundogs and other breeds at open shows since 1991 and Flatcoats at Championship show level since 2000. I will have the very great privilege to judge bitches at Crufts in 2015. One of my highlights was to judge Sh Ch Vbos The Kentuckian and award him BOB in 2006, I later had the thrill of showing him a few times in the year prior to his Crufts Best In Show when his owner was unable to do so.

I have always thoroughly enjoyed my visits to shows abroad both as a spectator and judge and feel very honoured to be asked to judge at breed club shows.

I hope this has given you some insight into my passion for Flatcoats. I cannot keep more than a few dogs at a time as those I have are my pets and companions first. I enjoy their company and being involved in activities with them and am very grateful for all the friends and opportunities I would never have had had without them.