

Gundogs

A steady stream of birds kept the dogs busy on the shoot at Arbury Hall



labradors. In a subsequent telephone conversation she invited me to Arbury Hall in Warwickshire, where she had arranged a day for a team of guns and would be picking up with no less than six chocolates.

Dorothy's first chocolate lab was Emma and within 20 months she had gained a third in a 14-dog novice stake. Dorothy is a very keen field trialler and has been involved with dogs for over 30 years. Looking at her success with her chocolates, it's clear that not only is she a good trainer of gundogs but also her breeding programme has had a huge influence on the working capabilities of the colour.

The first thing that you notice about the dogs is that they really do not conform to the stereotypical view of chocolate labs. These dogs are fit, athletic and go about their job with purpose.

The shoot at Arbury Hall is set amongst some wonderful Warwickshire countryside and offers some very challenging shooting. During the day there was a steady stream of birds shot and this kept the dogs busy with some difficult

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retrieves. One dog in particular caught my eye; at three years old Flint is a cracking looking dog. I first saw him at a field trial last year and since then he has won a novice field trial and has numerous awards. He is certainly no slouch and worked as well as any other lab that I have ever seen in the shooting field.

As the day progressed I soon forgot I was watching what many people view as a sub-standard coloured gundog, but then what's in a colour anyway? I personally don't like spaniels with a lot of white on them, but this doesn't affect their work - it is a matter of choice and what is pleasing to the eye. I for one like these 'brown labs'. Perhaps one day we shall see one in the Retriever Championships! ●

To find out more about Dorothy's working chocolates her website is www.grangemead-labradors.co.uk. The chocolate labrador website can be found at www.chocolate-labrador.org.uk



Mick says that Flint worked as well as any lab he's seen