



**The Judges & the Winners (from left to right): Joe Vella, Rob Tawton & King, Gareth Tawton & Monty, Mark Davis & Swampy, Russell Whitechurch & Kelly, Noel Eltringham & Tike, Joe Law.**



**Mark & Swampy with the trophies**



**Monty's clean delivery**



**The Workers with Mary Law (centre), Jane Vella (on Mary's right) & Jason Ferris (on right behind Jane).**



**Kelly shows dash & style**



**Swampy shows attention & control**



**Tike with tender mouth**



**Best Lady Handler, Georgina Golle & her Springer, Cherry**



**King is steady to shot**



**A family affair - Gareth, Siobhan & Riley Tawton**



**Mark, Wendy & Swampy - planning that final day!**



**"Gunnong Jugrawah" on the Murrumbidgee**

**Breeders & handlers, Noel & Kate Eltringham**

**36th Australian National Retrieving Trial Championship**

NSW conducted the Australian National Retrieving Trial Championship this year. The RNSWCC's Retrieving & Field Trial Committee formed a sub-committee to run both the State Championship and the National Championship on consecutive weekends in September.

Raising sufficient funds for both trials was a major task as, for the first time, the RNSWCC declined to contribute funds for either event. Donations came from gundog and breed clubs across Australia and from individuals associated with gundogs or retrieving. Eagle Pack Pet Food and Field & Game magazine signed on as major sponsors. Dozens of specially labelled wine were sold at gundog events throughout the year. The magnificent trophy table with all its crystal exemplified the success of the fundraising effort.

The venue was a stunningly beautiful, iconic Australian location, on the banks of the mighty Murrumbidgee River. The owners of "Gunnong Jugrawah", Sandy and Kathy Tait, extended their hospitality to the organisers over many months of preparation and during 3 consecutive weekends. The ACT Championship was run at the same location the week before the State Championship. The assistance and good humour of Bobby Porter, the Property & Stock Manager, were invaluable and meant that the trial grounds were superbly located to both test the dogs and give the gallery a great backdrop and spectacle.

The local community at Jugiong also got behind the event. The Jugiong Progress Association prepared the 3 course draw dinner and provided the food and drink at the prize giving, both held in their Public Hall. Parents from the Jugiong Public School provided lunch at the State trial and the parents of the Bongongo Public School did the same for the National. In return, some of the competitors visited the schools and gave the kids a demonstration of retrieving dogs in action. Both schools are small, around 10 students each, so the task of providing lunch for around 100 people each day was no mean feat. All proceeds went to their schools.

The judges were both from NSW. Joe Law has trained 4 dogs to their RT Championship, 2 under his Lindenlake prefix. He has judged 5 State Championships and the 1993 National. Joe Vella has trained 3 dogs to their Retrieving Trial Championship, including his current Grand RT Ch Kaemaetae All Black. A judge for more than 10 years, he has judged championships in NSW, the ACT, Tasmania & Sth Australia. Forty four dogs from 6 States, the ACT and New Zealand entered

the National, with 27 dogs and 17 bitches from 4 breeds. 36 Labradors and 5 Golden Retrievers joined 2 English Springer Spaniels and one Chesapeake Bay Retriever. The youngest dog was whelped on 6 April 2004 and the oldest on 2 December 1994. Several handlers entered more than one dog. 8 of the 35 handlers were women. The lone Kiwi was Tony Hogarth with his Lab bitch, NZ Gr FT Ch Black Molly of Greybanks.

The running order was determined at the public draw where the numbers for all competitors were drawn from a hat. After vetting on the first morning, 36 dogs started the National which comprised 8 runs over 3 days. The field was split into 2 to facilitate concurrent runs on the first 2 days. Each judge ran one run on the first day and 2 runs on the 2nd day. On the 3rd day, the judges co-judged the final 2 runs. The runs were demanding, comprising blinds and water. At the end of Day One, 16 dogs had retired leaving 22 to start Day 2. Only 9 dogs survived Day 2. 8 Labs and one Golden started the final day. 7 dogs from the starting field of 36 completed the Championship.

The Championship was won by Mark & Wendy Davis' homebred 4 year old chocolate Lab dog, RT Ch Beereegan One Tree. Handled by Mark, Swampy's winning margin was a decisive 23 points. He is the first chocolate Lab to win a National. It was an impressive performance as Mark and Wendy had personal worries that weekend when their pregnant daughter was hospitalised at home in Victoria. But she wouldn't hear of her mother coming home and leaving Mark and Swampy to compete alone.

2nd was Gareth & Siobhan Tawton's yellow Lab dog Gr RT Ch Kadnook Pride ov Cork, handled by Gareth. 5 year old Monty was bred by Jill Pohlke (Kadnook Kennels) in Victoria. The Tawtons moved to Victoria from the ACT earlier this year and had to leave a new business to attend the trials together with their youngster who is undoubtedly a handler in the making.

3rd place was another yellow Lab from Victoria, a 4 year old bitch, Russell Whitechurch's homebred National RT Ch Aderslot Crackers Triga. Russell handled 3 dogs with 2 in the top 10 after Day One. Kelly was the youngest dog to finish.

4th place was also from Victoria, Noel and Kate Eltringham's homebred 8 year old black Lab dog Gr RT Ch Reveiter Jet Kite, handled by Noel. 5th place was from the ACT. Rob and Pam Tawton's black Lab dog Gr RT Ch Kadnook King Of Kanbera CM, handled by Rob, was one month shy of his

8th birthday. Rob and Pam are the parents of 2nd place getter, Gareth Tawton. The oldest and only NSW dog to finish was John Palmer's Lab Ashlake Bennelong RRD, whelped on 16 February 1995. The only finisher not a Labrador was the Golden Retriever bitch, RT Ch Naancampa Gaby, handled by Trevor Stevens.

The winners include 3 of the 5 new Grand RT Champions. One was not entered as he is owned by one of the judges. The other is Steve Hall's Gr RT Ch Bambillay Brave Heart who sadly retired on the very last run. Nevertheless, Levi won the Special Judge's Prize awarded to the dog that most impressed both judges on either of the co-judged runs.

The National Retrieving Trial Championship was a very exciting event to watch, especially on the last day. It was a real joy to see the creme of Australia's gundogs compete at that level doing what comes naturally but not necessarily all that easily. For those with a close connection to the dogs, it was also very nerve wracking. Sighs of relief were clearly audible when dogs appeared over the rise bird in mouth. And there were tears when dogs completed that final run on the final day. You may be surprised to learn that retrieving trialling is very much a family affair. The long distances travelled to seriously campaign a retrieving dog make the support of family and friends essential. It's a team effort.

The National was an excellent, professionally run event. The sub-committee deserves a huge thank you from all of us in the gundog world. Where would we be without people like this? Special mention must go to the 2 judges, their wives, Mary Law and Jane Vella, and to Trial Manager Jason Ferris who were undoubtedly the engine room. I hate to think of the hours they voluntarily gave to bring this event to fruition. The next National Championship is in Western Australia in September 2006.

**CHRISTINE CUNNINGHAM**  
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