



## Bert and Peter Grade 5 Retriever

Julie Clayton spoke to Gundog Club student Peter Jennings, who achieved a distinction at Grade 5 with his retriever Bert.



*Bert waiting in a wildfowling blind*

### **Many congratulations to you and Bert. Tell us how you got into gundog training.**

Before I got Bert, I had a Labrador called Roger. I went wildfowling and Roger was good at this. I then joined a game shooting syndicate and they kept asking me to bring a dog. But while Roger was good at retrieving he wasn't at all steady, and there was no way I could take him on a game shoot.

So when I got Bert I resolved that he was going to be better trained, and I set out to work through all of the Gundog Club grades with him.

### **It's great to see a dog with all 5 rosettes. How long did it take you and Bert to work through all the grades?**

I started training Bert when I got him as a puppy using the Gundog Club books. When he was 7 months old I started training once a month with a Gundog Club instructor. Bert passed his Grade 1 when he was 9 months old, and Grade 2 the month after that. We took Grade 3 when Bert was a year old, and then we needed a bit longer to make the Grade 4 standard and took that when Bert was 22 months old. We completed both parts of Grade 5 when Bert was just over two years old.

### **Tell us a bit more about your training, and how you prepared for taking the graded tests.**

In my run up to the G5 test, I had more lessons with an instructor about every 4 to 6 weeks who explained what was required for the test and gave us exercises to use for training. I took Bert for a walk twice a day and complete the exercises during his walks. I also went out 4 times a week just for training.

### **What is your advice to students just starting out and thinking about taking Grade 1?**

I would tell anyone just don't give up. If your dog does not seem to be learning an exercise leave it, and go back to it a few days later. You will be surprised to find that your dog did learn something. Most importantly, keep it fun – for you and the dog.

### **Thanks so much for talking to the Gundog Club. What's next for you and Bert now you have completed all the grades?**

Last shooting season I took Bert beating and picking up on a number of shoots and he behaved very well – all season he only made one mistake (when he got a bit over excited). The syndicate captain at the end of the season made a point of thanking me for the contribution that Bert had made.

We are now going on to compete in Working Tests. In our first test we came 14<sup>th</sup> of 29. It was our first time in a competition and in the first 2 exercises we scored 8 and 10 because my nerves let us down. Once my nerves settled, Bert scored 20, 17 and 17 in the other 3 tests, so we are looking forward to doing more, and then hopefully a field trial. Of course Bert will continue to work on shoots.

**Retriever Grade 5** is in two parts - the dog has to complete 2 tests, under two different assessors, in two different places. The tests cover walk up, water retrieves, and retrieves of cold game.

Retrieving distances fall between 80 and 120 yards for blind retrieves and between 120 and 180 yards for marked retrieves.