



... Above: a magnificently constructed Pointer in Denmark; in superb condition too.

... At right: Portrait of the Artist, with Two Pointers. Sketch in oils by Ben Marshall, 1767-1835.



## The origin of the English Pointer

by Col. David Hancock (U.K.)

I do not believe that the English Pointer originated in Spain or indeed that "pointers" sprang from there, as is frequently claimed. It is important, however, to clarify the nomenclature being used from the outset. There are French, Italian, German, Portuguese, Spanish and English Pointers, with several different breeds of Pointer within some of those countries.

A "Pointer" basically is a type of shorthaired (usually) hound-like bird-dog, not a breed.

It is misleading and inaccurate, not to say somewhat arrogant, to dub the English Pointer as "The Pointer". The pointing dog was utilized all over Western Europe in the first half of the second millenium A.D., with distinctive types, some later being developed into distinct breeds, being stabilized in Southern Germany (the Weimaraner), in Spain (the Navarro), in France (the Braque varieties) and Italy (the Bracco), as well as in Britain and Portugal. Of course, the Spanish Pointers brought home to Britain by British officers after nine years of duty in Spain—after the Treaty of Utrecht, early in the 18th Century—had some influence on pointing dogs in the British Isles. But why should the British Army, which served all over Continental Europe before and after this date, not have come home with other point-

ing dogs too? I believe far too much has been made of this minute part of Pointer history in Britain—as indeed it has of the Foxhound cross.

I have just finished a study of the wealthy and well-informed William Arkwright's classic work *The Pointer and his Predecessors*, 1902. Despite the time and money he obviously spend searching not only Spanish but other Continental archives too, he produced no evidence of a Spanish origin for the breed. But the historical evidence which can be produced demands the most careful scrutiny before definitive statements can be made.

Researchers, like Bede Maxwell in her "The Truth about Sporting Dogs", have linked the modern pointer with the "Whyte Dogges...out of hotte countries" and "Spotted Whelpes from Whyte Hound litters" mentioned by Turberville in 1575. The "dish-face" of the pointer is immediately detected in the "Whyte Hound" and then traced back through "Chien Courants", to the hounds of Gaul, the Celtic Hound, the sighthounds of ancient Egypt, even the hunting mastiffs of Assyria. And there is undoubtedly a distinct "scenthound" look about almost all the pointer group.

But such an association is entirely physical, and overlooks totally the instinctive way in which the pointer hunts. Of course the pointers have

hound blood—so do Irish Setters—but there is to me a more convincing link with the ancient "Chien Oysel", from which our spaniels and setter descended than from "Chien Courants", which hunt in packs, give tongue and keep their noses low. If you look for example at the medieval miniature from "les Deduits de la Chasse des Bestes Sauvages" in the Bibliotheque Nationale, Paris, featuring the Chien Oysel or Hawking Dog, the short-haired dogs portrayed look as much like pointers as the longhaired ones resemble spaniels and setters. The first time I saw a German Longhaired Pointer at a distance, I could have sworn it was an Irish Setter! Roy Jerome of the "Innisfail" Irish Setter kennels in California has a photograph of one of his dogs completely shaved for tick removal; the outline is quite unmistakably "pointer".

Espee de Selincourt, writing in 1683—who made perhaps the earliest reference to gundogs (chiens couchans) as "braques that stop at the scent (arrétant tout) and hunt with the nose high". In the 16th Century the Italian braque was called the "cane da rete"—the dog of the net; the French, being great admirers of the Italian dogs, soon transmitting this into "chien d'arrêt" or stop-dog, in literal translation. The specialist work of the

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